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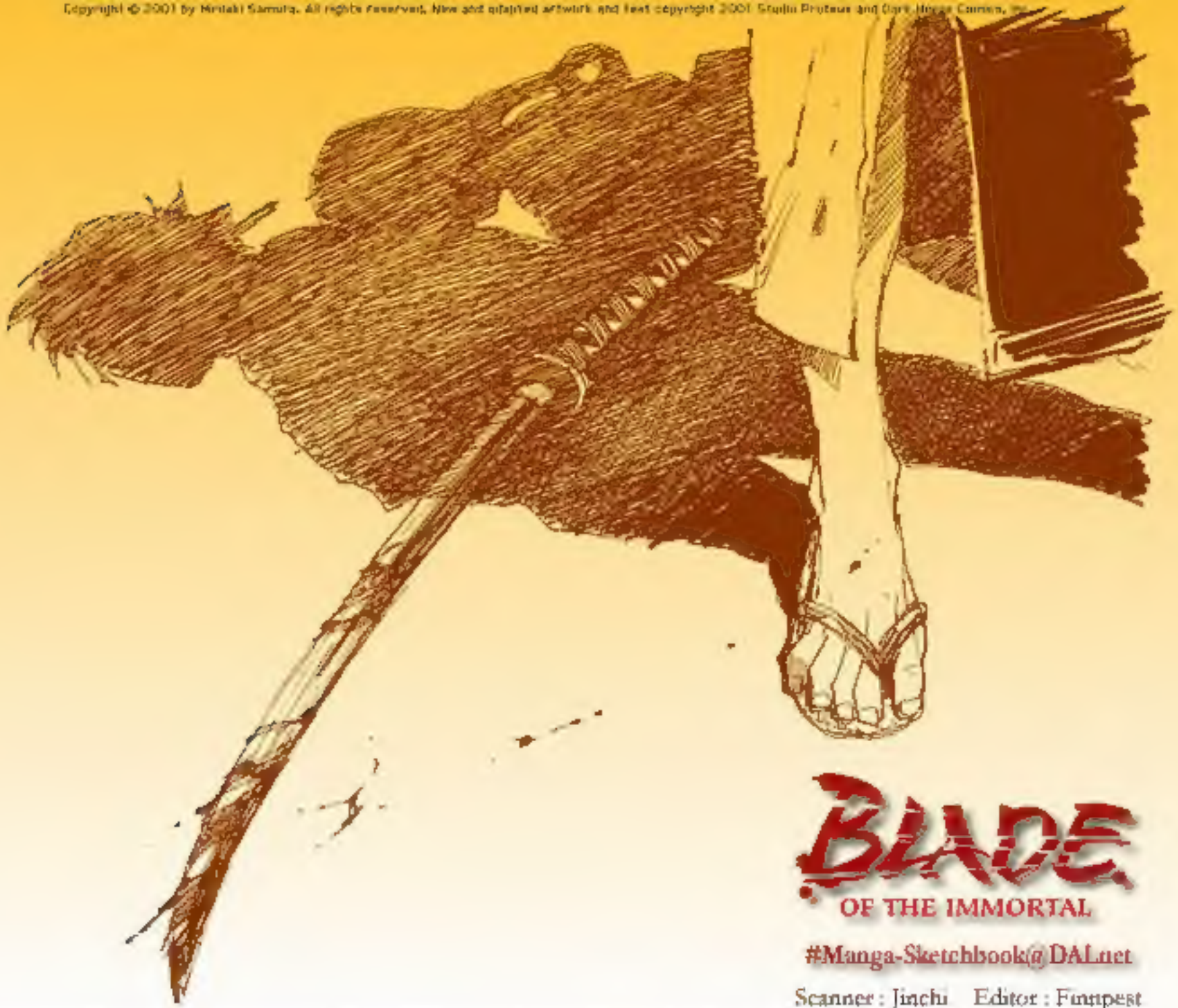

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

#Manga-Sketchbook@DALnet

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HIROAKI SAMURA

無限の住人 BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Beasts

BLADE
OF THE IMMORTAL

Beasts

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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL VOL. 11: BEASTS
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BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story
HIROAKI SAMURA

translation
Dana Lewis & Toren Smith

lettering and retouch
Tomoko Saito

Beasts

DARK HORSE COMICS®

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Swastika

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the "crux gammata" as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare," from *su* — "well" + *asti* "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counterclockwise direction and is called the *manji* in Japanese. The arms of the *swastika*, which point in a clockwise direction, are generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins, and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century [ca. 1782–3]. *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

The Artwork

The creator of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror-imaging his artwork. Normally, Westernized manga are first copied in a mirror-image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However, Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and re-pasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore, most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue

Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the illustrations, we decided to leave those in their original Japanese. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in typical samurai manga and is considered to be one of the features that has made *Blade* such a hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story, with some characters speaking in the mannered style of old Japan while others speak as if they were street-corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

GLOSSARY

Ittō-ryū: the radical sword school of Anotsu Kagehisa

kawara-ban: an early form of news tabloid. Roughly printed on wood blocks, these cheap scandal sheets were popular among Edo's working class.

kenshi: a swordsman (or swordswoman), not necessarily born into the samurai caste

mon: a small coin

Mugai-ryū: sword school of the Akagi assassins; literally, "without form"

Nakasendō: one of the five main thoroughfares connecting Edo to the provinces. The Nakasendo was the inland route to Kyoto, while the more famous Tokkaido followed the coast.

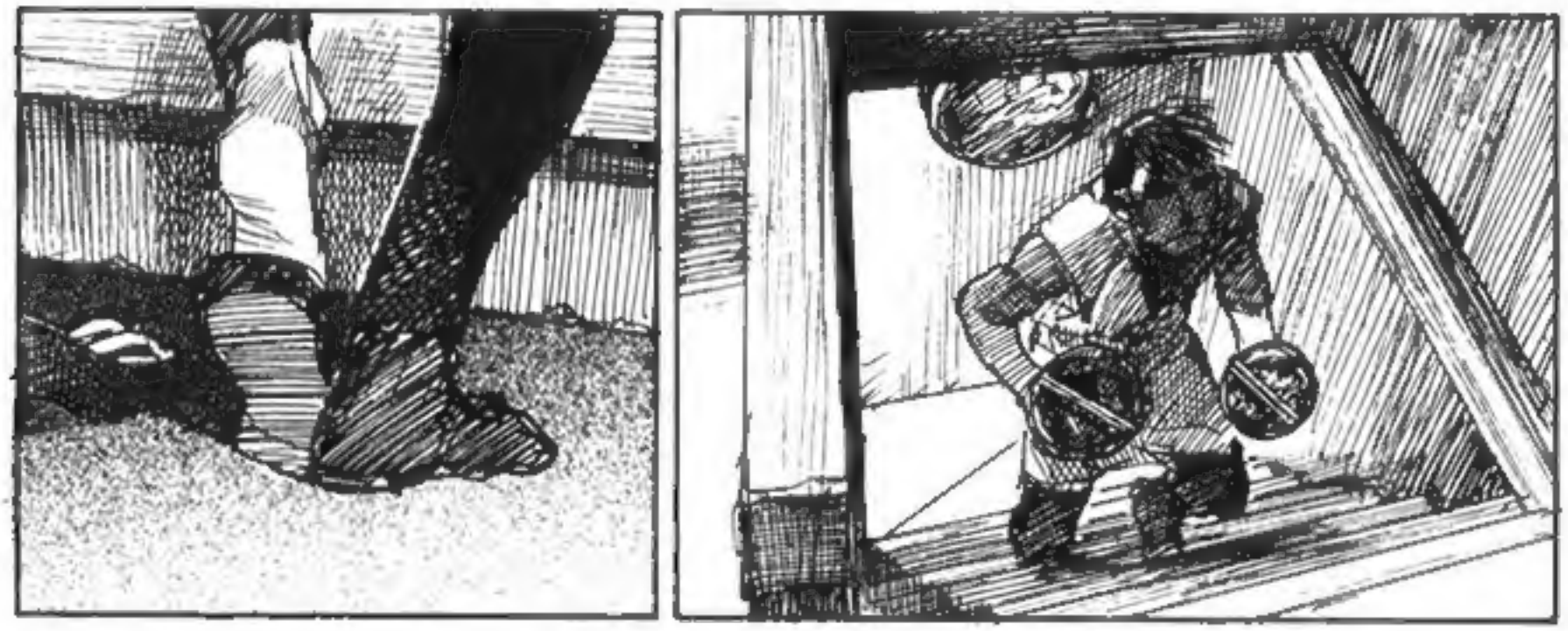
rashamen: a Japanese woman who slept with foreign men, a contemptuous term from the first days of contact between Japan and the West. By the time of this story, almost all such contact was limited to the port town of Nagasaki in southern Japan.

ryō: a gold piece

sekisho: checkpoint regulating travel from Edo to other *han* (feudal domains). All travelers had to submit papers at official checkpoints along the main highways in and out of Edo.

tegata (tsuko tegata): official travel pass for transiting *sekisho*

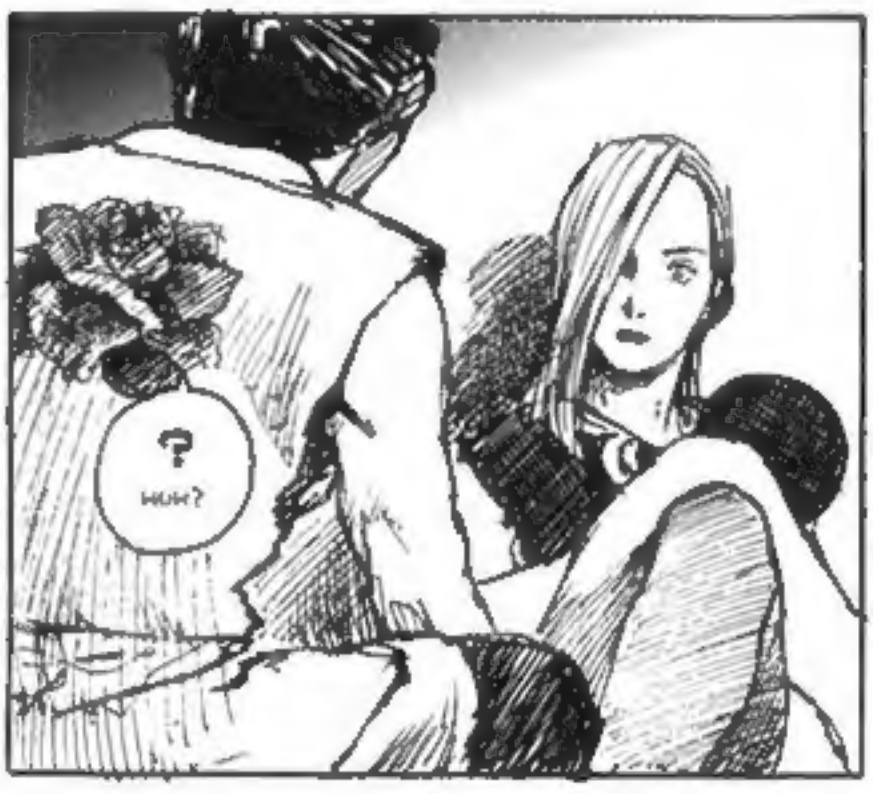
BEASTS
Part 1



HEY, HYAKURIN!
I GOT SOME GRUB... LET'S EAT!

YEOW!
MM.

HOW'S IT DOIN'? YOUR NECK...
THE PAIN'S GONE, BUT--
.....


?
HUH?

WHAT'S THAT, SHINRIJI?
?! OH... THIS?

I JUST WENT AND SAW THE BOSS. IT'S INFO FOR OUR NEXT GIG.

SURE I KNOW.

THE *BOSS*?!

I DIDN'T KNOW YOU KNEW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.

NO KIDDING. HUH.

.....

.....

UHM... HYAKU-RIN?

IF WE DON'T... YOU KNOW... GET BACK TO OUR *MAIN* BUSINESS...

.....

I MEAN... GEEZ, HOW DO I PUT THIS?

?

RECENTLY... IT JUST FEELS LIKE...

...LIKE THINGS AREN'T *GOING* SO GOOD, Y'KNOW? MAYBE 'CAUSE TAKING ON THE BOSS OF THE *ITTŌ-RYŪ* IS A BIT TOO *HEAVY-DUTY* FOR US...?

I MEAN, THE *ITTŌ-RYŪ'S* NOT EXACTLY A BUNCH OF *STREET PUNKS.*

BEIN' *OBJECTIVE* AND ALL... IF WE GET ANY CLOSER TO THE TOP THAN WE HAVE ALREADY... WE'LL *REALLY* BE OUTTA OUR DEPTH.

HYAKURIN... LIKE, I KNOW YOU HAVEN'T *FORGOTTEN* OR ANYTHING, BUT...

...WHEN WE EARN OUR BOSSES A HUNDRED *RYŌ*...

...THEY SET US *FREE.* NO RECORD. *INNOCENT!*

IF WE JUST STICK WITH CHEAP HEADS, A *RYŌ* AND A HALF EACH...

...WE CAN DO THREE A MONTH, *EASY.* IN TWO YEARS, WE COULD WALK.

THIS *MUGAI-RYŪ* STUFF... YEESH.

OKAY, I'M NEVER HUNGRY... I'M NEVER BORED.

BUT GOING AFTER THESE *ITTŌ-RYŪ* GUYS... MAN.

MY LIFE KEEPS FLASHING BEFORE MY EYES, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN.

YEAH. MAYBE.

SO, *UM!!* *HYAKU-RIN!*

I...I G-GOT A *GREAT* IDEA, OKAY? 'LEAST, *I* TH-THINK IT IS.

WELL, Uh... IT'S LIKE... TWO YEARS OR SO FROM NOW?

WHEN WE GO STRAIGHT? WE WON'T HAVE ANY *MONEY*, RIGHT...?

NO FAMILY, NO SPOUSES, NO *NOTHING* WAITING FOR US...

AND SO, *UM*... THE TWO OF US?

WE COULD... UH...BE.. P-PART-NERS?

IN A BUSI-NESS...?

OR... A ... JUST... Y'KNOW...

P-P-PLAIN OLD "PARTNERS"...?

YEECH! GROSS!

S-SORRY! JOKE! I WAS JUST JOKING!

I DON'T B-BLAME YOU FOR BEING GROSSED OUT. SORRY!!

...?

A FLY.

SPUT

OK.

SO. ANYWAY.

UM... NOTHING. FORGET IT. SORRY.

WHAT WAS THAT YOU WERE SAYING...?

NEXT TIME I'LL GET US SOME BETTER FOOD.

.....

.....

STILL, HYAKURIN... I'VE BEEN THINKING. YOU DON'T SEEM SO...

.....

WELL, SO DEDICATED *YOUR-SELF.*

COM-PARED TO *GIICHI*, Y'KNOW?

YEAH? WELL...

Hmm

NOW, *YOU.* YOU BIT THE HAND THAT FED YOU... WASN'T IT?

YEAH, BASICALLY. WORKING AS A BODYGUARD FOR A SILK MERCHANT. KINDA DIPPED INTO THE OL' CASHBOX, HEH, HEH...

WHAT?!

WHY IS IT, I WONDER...? IT'S LIKE...

.....

I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW TO LIVE ANY OTHER WAY.

YOU BOUGHT YOURSELF A *DEATH SENTENCE* FOR A FEW PIECES OF *PETTY CASH?*

YOU MUST BE MORE OF AN IDIOT THAN I THOUGHT!

GEEZ... PEOPLE LIKE *YOU*... THROWN INTO THIS SORT OF SHIT PRACTICALLY BY *MISTAKE.*

IT JUST ISN'T *RIGHT.* PISSES ME OFF! I WISH I COULD JUST TELL YOU TO TAKE A HIKE, BUT... CAN'T.

I GUESS...

...IF THERE'S ANYTHING I REALLY DISLIKE ABOUT THIS JOB...IT'S *THAT.*

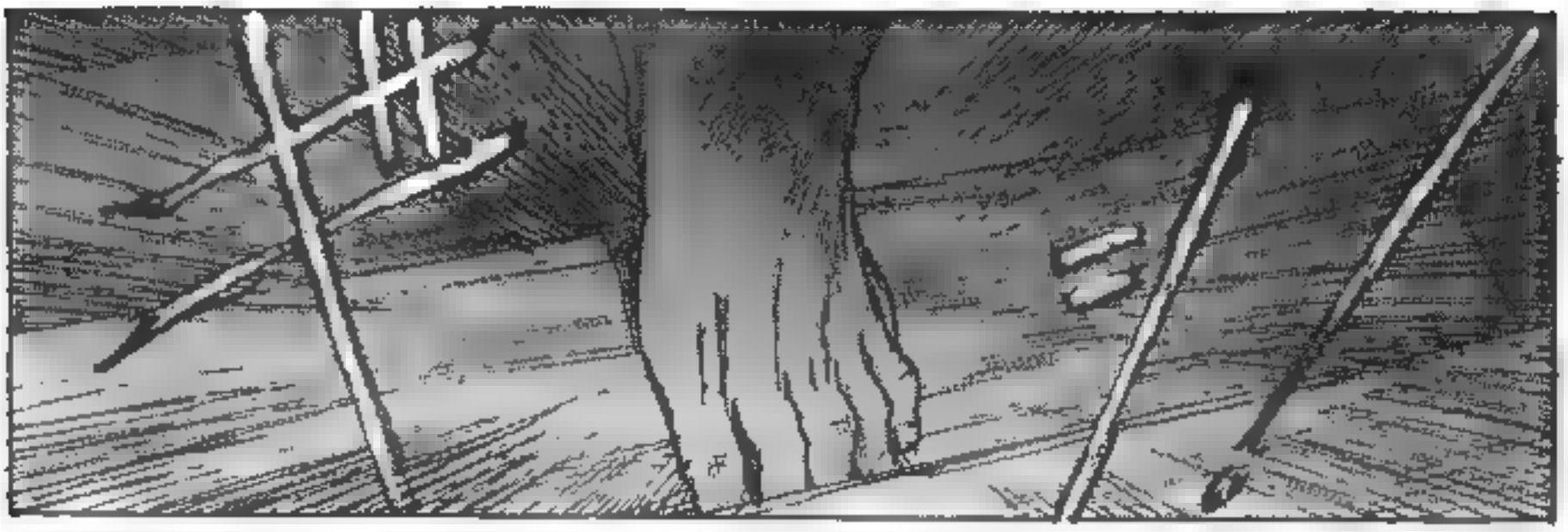
HYAKURIN... .....

YOU'RE ACTUALLY *GOOD* AT HEART, AREN'T YOU?

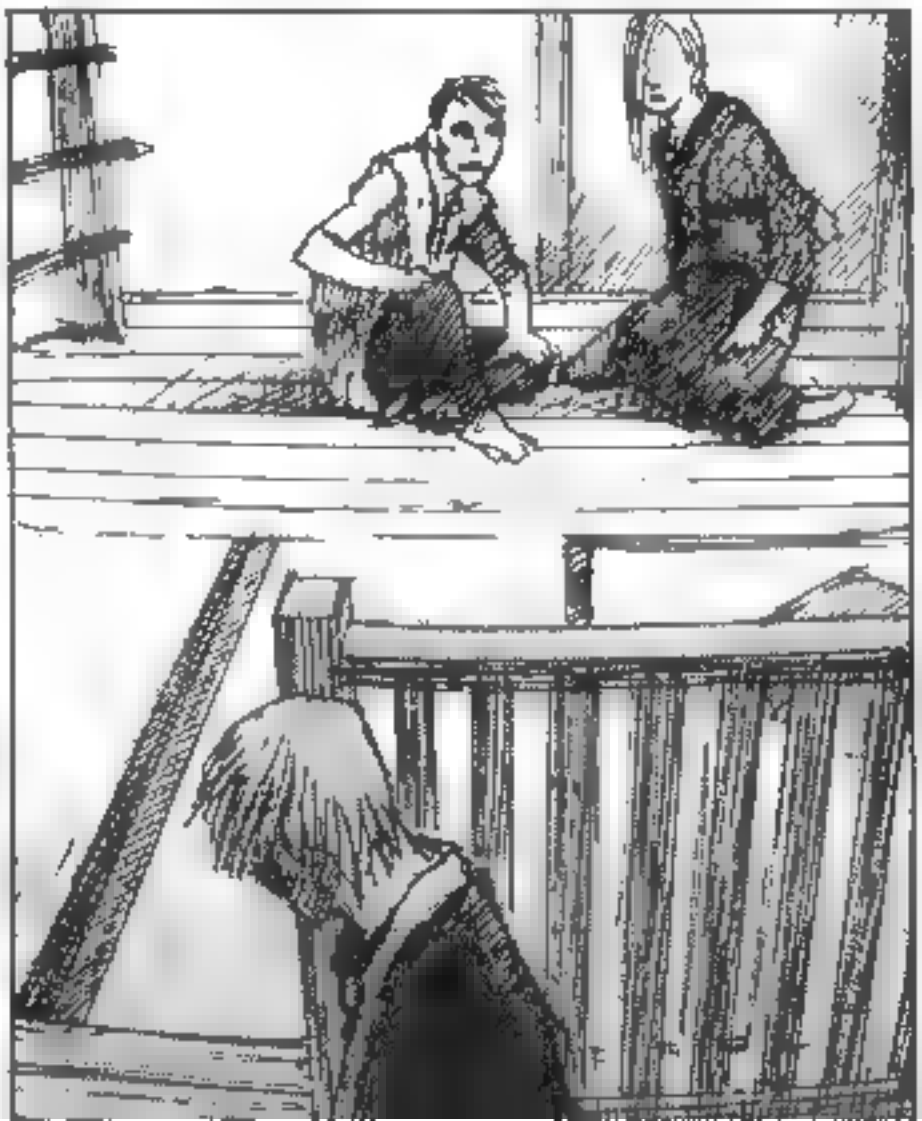
SHUT *UP,* YOU FUCKING *CRETIN!*

KRAK

I'M *SORRY!* I'M *SORRY!*



??
AH!



SHI...
.....

SH-
SHIRA...
?!

THOUGHT YOU WERE *DEAD* IN A *DITCH* SOMEWHERE.

WHERE THE HELL *WERE* YOU? AND WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR *HAIR*?

.....
.....

GIICHI.

WHERE IS HE?

WELL... IF IT'S *GIICHI* YOU WANT...

...HE'S OUT "HUNTING." WON'T BE BACK TONIGHT.

SUCH A *SERIOUS* FELLOW... NOT LIKE *US.*

YOU NEED HIM FOR SOME-THING...?

NAW.

OKAY...
.....

SO HE ISN'T HERE.

HYAKU-RIN...
.....

ACTUALLY... TODAY I CAME TO TALK...

...TO *YOU.*

BACK WHEN WE WERE STAKING OUT THE *SEKISHO* FOR ANOTSU KAGEHISA.

IT WAS JUST YOU TWO ON THE NAKASENDŌ, RIGHT?

?
YES.

HOW MANY DID YOU GET?

UH-UH. *FIVE.*

FOUR, I THINK.

ARE YOU *SURE*...?

YOU CHECKED THE BODIES?

OF *COURSE!*

OH... WAIT.

ACTUALLY, I RECENTLY HEARD ONE OF THEM SURVIVED.

SO?

HYAKU-RIN...
.....

YOU JOINED THE *MUGAI-RYŪ* SIX MONTHS EARLIER THAN I DID. YOU'VE GOT *SENIORITY.*

BUT WHEN IT COMES TO *KILLING*, GIRL, YOU'RE A SNOT-NOSED *APPRENTICE*-- COMPARED TO *ME.*

AND SO... AS A GUY WHO'S GOT *MUGAI-RYŪ* STAMPED ALL OVER HIM...

HEH HEH HEH FOR NOW, ANYWAY.

I THOUGHT I'D GIVE YOU SOME SWEET ADVICE... SHINRIJI, MY MAN-- *YOU* LISTEN, TOO.

LETTING SOMEONE WHO'S SEEN YOUR FACE ESCAPE *ALIVE*...

...EVEN BY A *FLUKE*... WELL, *PROS* DON'T DO THAT.

THAT'S WHAT YOU GET WHEN YOU USE HALF-ASSED CRAP LIKE *POISON*. YOU CAN'T SAY YOU'VE KILLED SOMEONE...

...UNTIL YOU'VE *HACKED OFF THEIR HEAD.*

WOUND A WILD *BEAST*, AND YOU'LL PAY FOR IT *LATER.*

IN *SPADES*, BLONDIE. *SPADES!*

THAT'S A LAUGH.

HAH !

I MEAN, LOOK WHO'S *TALKING!!*

I HEAR *MANNI* WHACKED A CHUNK OFF THAT *ARM* OF YOURS, RIGHT...?

.....
.....

HMPH. WELL, WHATEVER.

THANKS FOR THE TIP.

.....
.....

AIN'T THAT SWEET.

SEE YA.

MAYBE.

IF WE BOTH LIVE LONG ENOUGH.

YOU'RE NOT WAITING FOR GIICHI?

WHY NOT?

FORGET IT.

IT'S BETTER...

...IF HE'S *NOT* HERE.

.....
.....
.....?!

STRANGE...
.....
HE WAS ALWAYS A COLD BASTARD. BUT NOW... HE'S *ICE.*

Y-YEAH. AND HIS *FACE*... DOES LOSING AN ARM DO *THAT* TO YOU?

I DUNNO, HYAKURIN...

HE'S RIGHT... I'VE GOT A *BAD* FEELING...

SHINRI-JI!

HUH? NOW?! OKAY SURE

PACK UP! *NOW!* WE'RE GETTING OUT OF HERE!

KTAKK

LESSIE THIS ONE AND THIS ONE

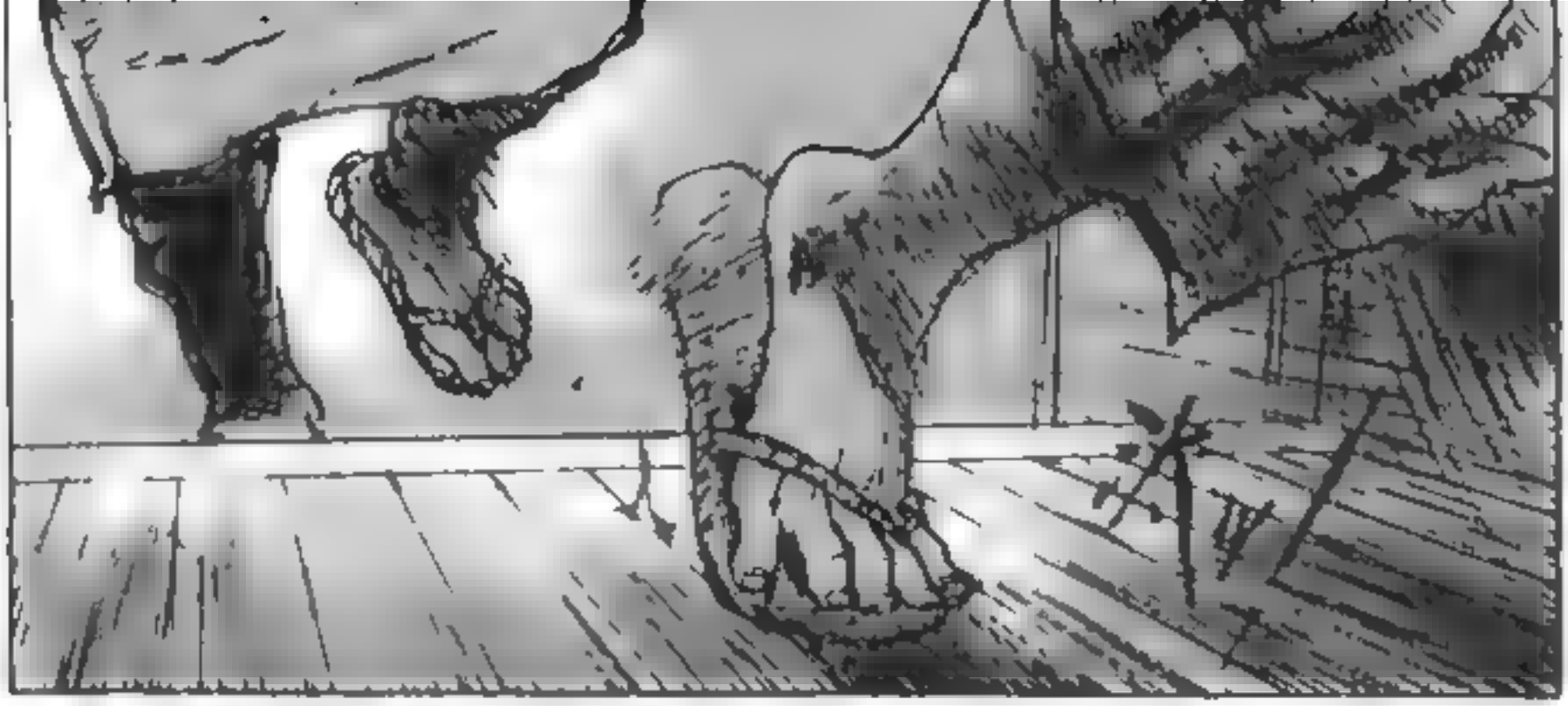
!?

WHOO

DECIDED TO WAIT FOR GIICHI AFTER ALL?

WELL, WE'RE--

WHO THE HELL—



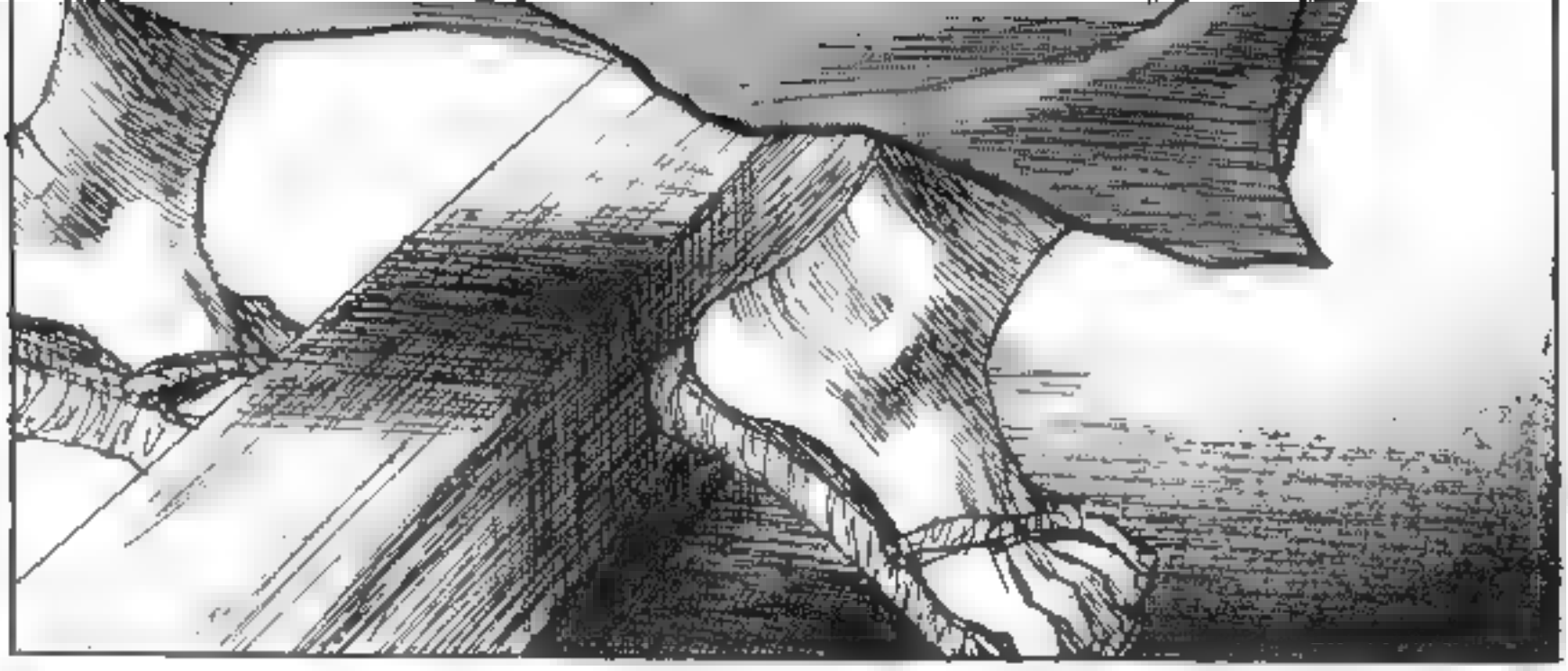
!!

LET GO, YOU ASS-HOLES!
OW...!

SPLIT
SPLIT

SPLAT

OKAY!
GET TAMASAKI!!



NNG...
AAH?!

HEH, HEH, HEH...

WELL...? EXCEPT... SHE'S GOT BLACK HAIR.

NAW... IT'S *HER*, ALL RIGHT.

!

SEE? CHECK IT OUT!

HEY, LITTLE LADY... YOU REMEMBER THIS FACE?

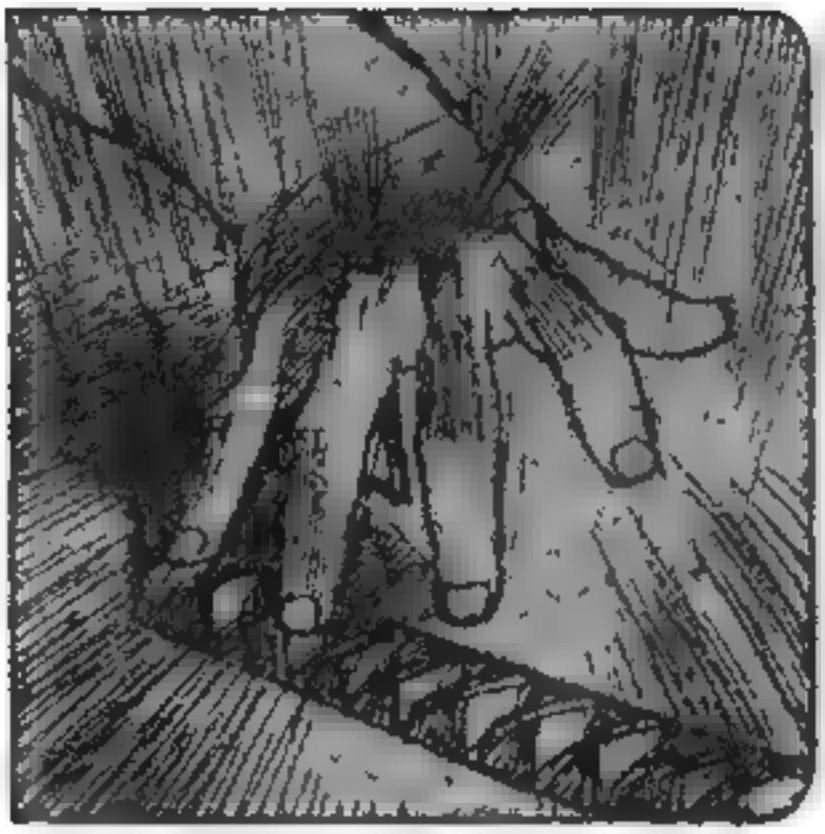
HEH, HEH... PROBABLY NOT, HUH? I MEAN, WHY *BOTHER?*

ONE OF THOSE *CANNON FODDER* SWORDSMEN YOU LIKE PUMPING FULL OF THOSE LITTLE POISON DARTS.

DEAD MEAT. SO WHY WASTE THE EFFORT? EXCEPT THIS ONE *PULLED THROUGH!*

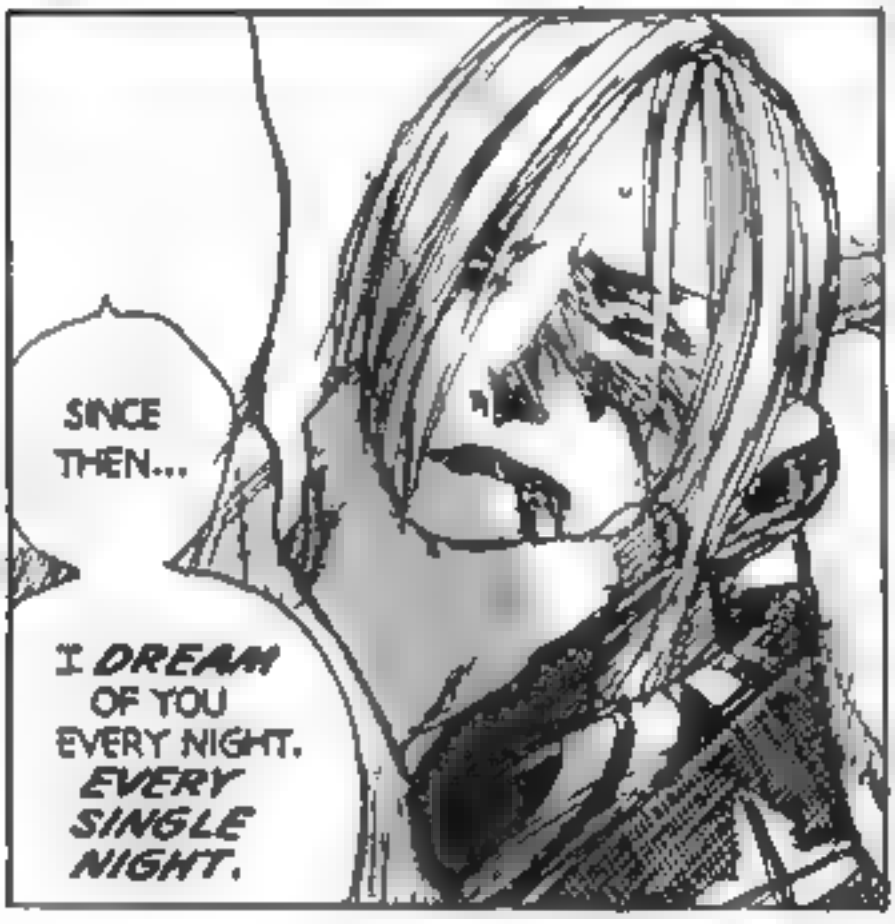
HEH, HEH... THAT'S *RIGHT*, BABE.

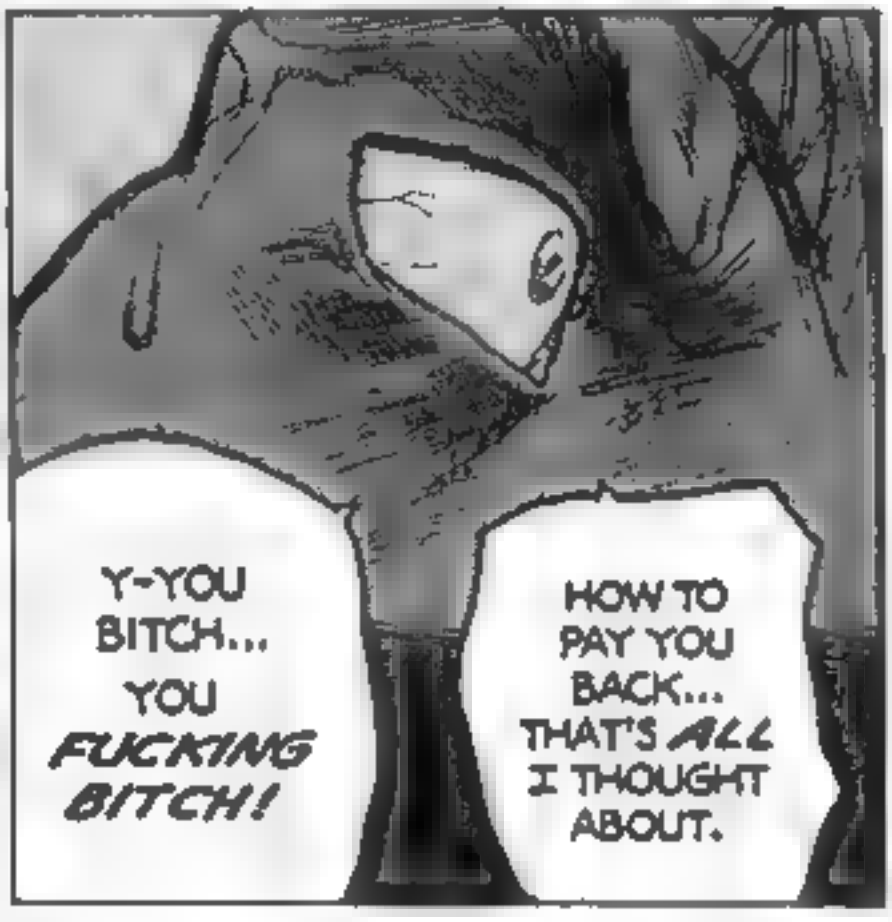
LOOKS LIKE YOU REMEMBER ME *NOW.*



CAN'T MOVE MY TWO MIDDLE FINGERS.
THAT DAMN *POISON* YOU USED ROTTED MY MUSCLES.

PLUS THIS MESSED-UP *EYE*...
PRETTY MUCH WASHED UP AS A *KENSHI*.


SINCE THEN...
I *DREAM* OF YOU EVERY NIGHT. *EVERY SINGLE NIGHT.*


Y-YOU BITCH... YOU *FUCKING BITCH!*
HOW TO PAY YOU BACK... THAT'S *ALL* I THOUGHT ABOUT.

I AIN'T GONNA JUST *KILL* YOU, BABE. NAW... IT'S GONNA [redacted]. I'M GONNA DESTROY YOUR *BODY* AND *MIND* AN INCH AT A TIME!

YOU'RE GONNA *WISH* YOU WERE DEAD, BITCH.

THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A COUPLE OF GUYS HERE WITH HER!

LOOK IN *BACK!*

I SAW A FACE LOOKIN' OUT THE SECOND FLOOR.

OH, YEAH?

HEY! HE'S UPSTAIRS! *UP-STAIRS!*

HMM...

COME ON, YOU! GET UPSTAIRS!

WHAT'S YER NAME AGAIN!

WHAT THE FU--?!
GET HIM!!!
?!
HUH?
NYAKU-RIN...!!

NO, SHINRIJI! RUN!

THESE GUYS ARE ITTŌ-RYŪ!

YOU CAN'T TAKE ALL OF THEM!

DIE...!!

GUUK

HUH?

AW, SHIT!

!

AGGH

HEY!

HYAKU-RIN...!

.....

.....!!

FUAP

GIVE ME A FUCKIN' BREAK!

WHAT KINDA FANTASY YOU LIVE IN, ANYWAY...? STUPID LITTLE *PUNK!*

THERE AIN'T NO *REAL* HEROES IN THIS WORLD!

AAA!

GIVE ME A FUCKIN' BREAK!

HHA. ?!

UKFF!

HUH?! HOLY SHIT!

FOO

SHH

.....

.....

S-SORRY, MAN!

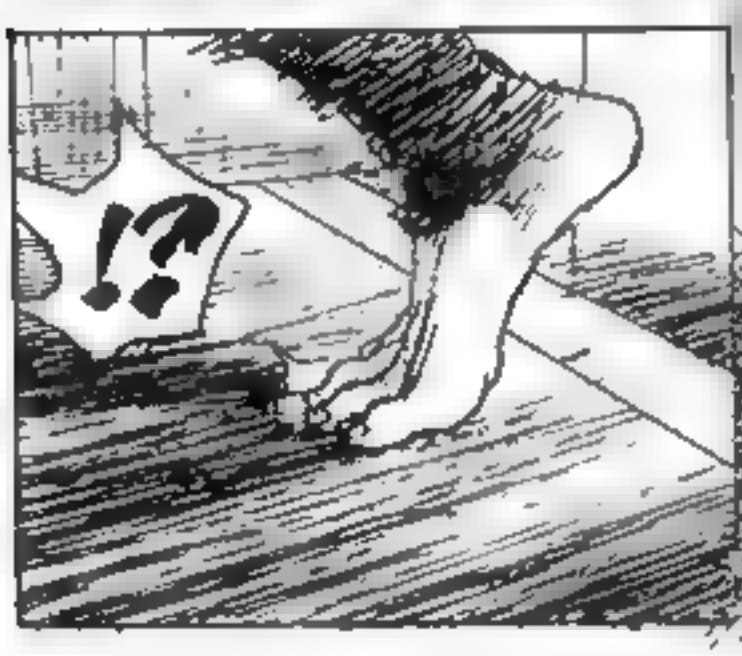
Uh...

.....

SHIP

HYAKU-
RIIIN--!

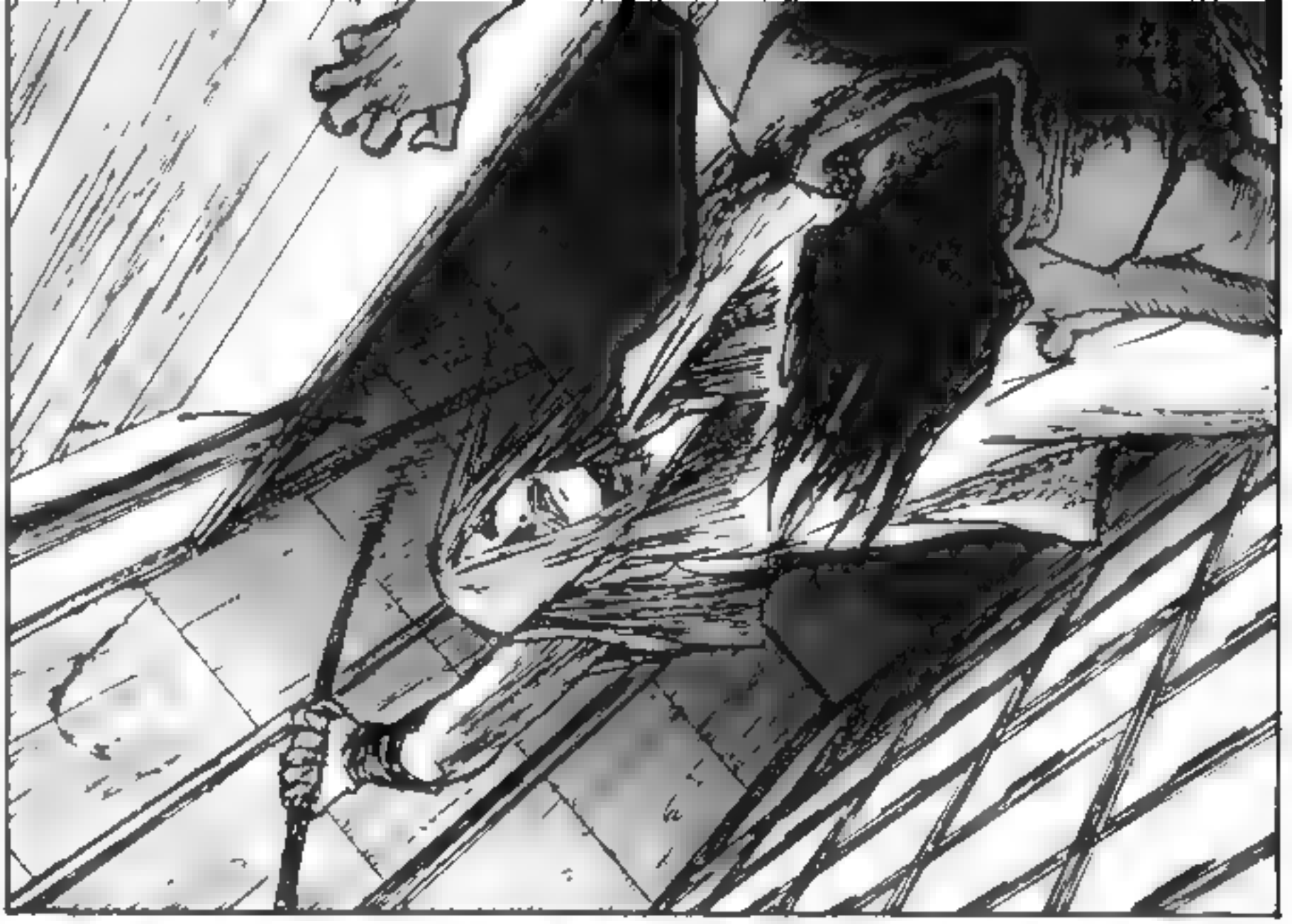
OH,
SHIN-
RIJI...
.....

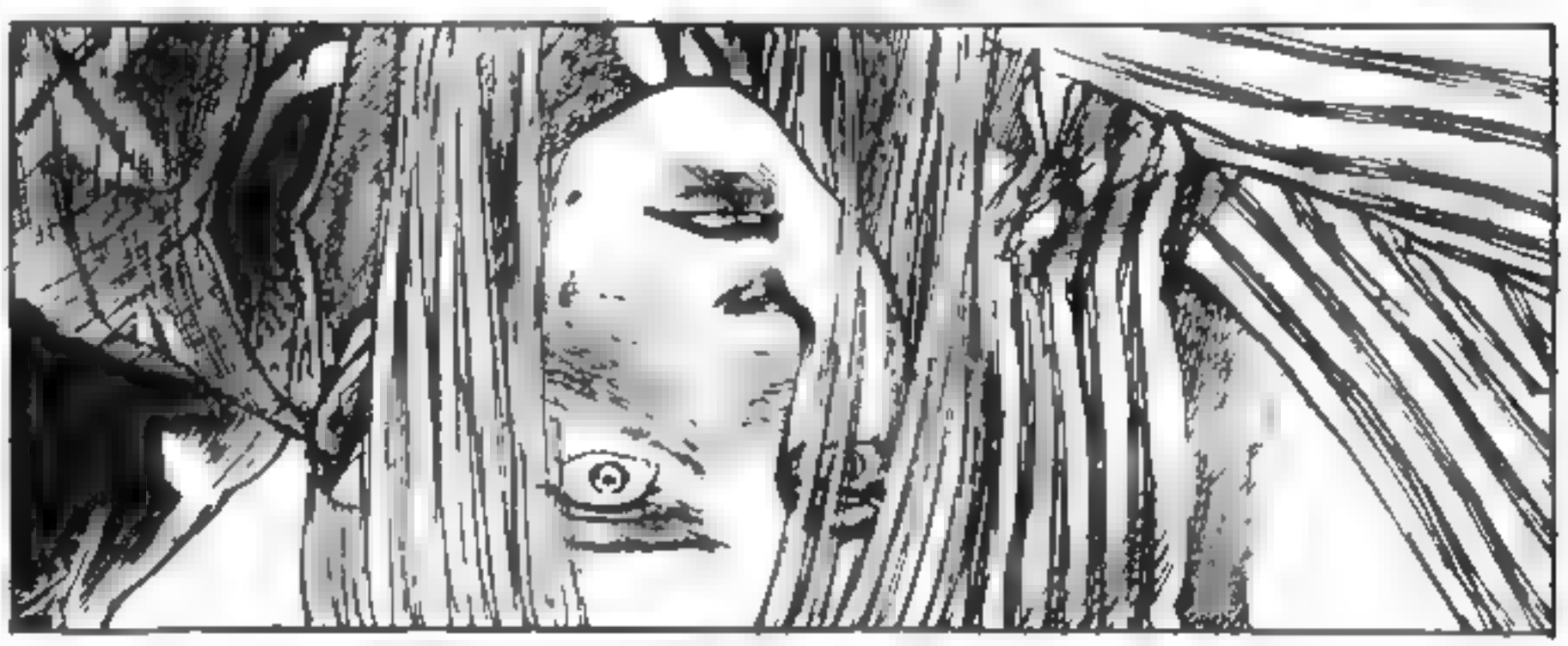

!?

"CONTROL THE TERRAIN," HE SAID. NOW I SEE WHY.

YOU HAVE A FIRM GRASP OF THE *DIMENSIONS.*

.....
.....
.....





HFF...
...

YOU.
HOW MANY DID HE KILL? GO SEE.

Uh...
SURE THING, KINUKA!

LOOKS LIKE... *FOUR.*

SUICIDE... DAMN PUNK.

FOUR! DAMN IT.

NOT *GOOD.* THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SECRET FROM ABAYAMA.

MORE TO THE POINT. IT'S NOT JUST THESE TWO.

WE LOST *NINE* OF OUR MEN IN THE DECOY OPERATION.

SO AT LEAST TWO, *THREE* MORE...

LET IT *GO,* KINUKA.

OKAY, GUYS *DIED.* THAT SUCKS.

BUT IT'S *HIS-TORY.*

JUST GIVES US MORE REASON TO ENJOY *FUCKING UP* THE BITCH.

IF WE MAKE HER COUGH UP EVERYTHING *SHE KNOWS*, YOU THINK THE OLD MAN'LL *COMPLAIN*? SHIT, HE'LL KISS OUR ASSES!

....

....?

!

HOO!

AH--!

FBD

NNGGGAAAHHH!

.....
.....
.....

DON'T PROVOKE HER, FOOL! YOU CAN'T PREDICT HOW PEOPLE WILL ACT WHEN THEY SEE THEIR FRIENDS KILLED!
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE!

Y-YEAH... RIGHT.

LET'S GO. EACH OF YOU CARRY A BODY.
WHAT ABOUT FUJII?
HE'S KINDA IN TWO PIECES...

WHERE WE GONNA TAKE 'EM? THAT PLACE OVER IN FUKAGAWA AGAIN?

WHY NOT? IT'S *MADE* FOR IT.

I DUNNO, MAN. I DON'T LIKE DUMPING GUY'S NEAR THAT OLD, DESERTED *WHORE-HOUSE!*

COME ON! IF YOU'RE GONNA BE A GHOST, WHY NOT NEAR A WHOREHOUSE? HAW, HAW!

HO!! FINALLY! SO... HOW'D IT GO?

LIKE SHIT. BUT WE GOT HER.

GUESS IT PAYS TO TRUST STRANGERS.

IT WAS JUST LIKE YOU SAID, PAL. DON'T KNOW WHO THE HELL YOU *ARE*...

...BUT THANKS FOR THE TIP.

IT FILLS ME WITH *RIGHTEOUS JOY* TO HELP MY FELLOW MAN.

HEH, HEH... SO IT WAS *NOTH-ING.*

NOW... YOUR SIDE OF THE BARGAIN?

OH, YEAH. RIGHT.

BUT... IS THIS *REALLY* ALL YOU WANT?

I MEAN... JUST ONE LOUSY *TEGATA*?

THIS LITTLE SCRAP OF PAPER IS ALL THE REWARD I DESIRE...

...MY FRIEND.

BEASTS
Part 2

...

SPLASH

koff!
koff!
koff
hkk

.....

WELL. SHIT.

CUT HER DOWN.

I'M TIRED OF HITTING HER.

MAN, IT'S HOT IN HERE...

YEAH... CAN'T WE OPEN THE DOOR?

NO! SOMEONE MIGHT HEAR HER SCREAM. WE DON'T WANT ATTENTION.

REMEMBER OUR DEAD COMRADES, AND ENDURE.

TAMA-ZAKI ...?!

HEH HEH HEH... I'M READY.

AND SO ARE *THESE* BABIES.

DRINK!

GOOD... STILL GOT SOME LIFE IN YOU.

EXCELLENT. BE A BITCH IF YOU CROAKED TOO *EASY*.

Y'KNOW... BEFORE I JOINED THE *ITTO-RYU*, I GOT TO HELP TORTURE *CHRISTIANS*. NOW, *THAT* WAS SOME *SERIOUS* SHIT. PEELING OFF THEIR SKIN...

RAPING AND SLICING UP GIRLS, RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEIR PARENTS... MOLTEN SULFUR DOWN THE THROAT... YEAH.

COMPARED TO *THAT*, BABE...

...WE'RE JUST PLAYING A LITTLE *ROUGH*, HERE.

.....

.....

SHIT... I DON'T *GET* IT. YOU *OWE* THESE GUYS SO BAD...

...YOU'D *DIE* FOR THEM?

C'MON, BABY-CAKES!

IF *YOU* DON'T TELL THEM, HOW ARE THEY EVER GONNA KNOW WE GOT THE INFO FROM YOU? *WE* AIN'T GONNA TELL!

IS THAT IT?

OR... IF YOU *BLAB*, THE BOSS OR YOUR PALS WHACK YOU?

AND IF YOU *DON'T* TALK... YOU'LL *DIE* ANYWAY. RIGHT HERE, REAL *SLOW.*

.....
.....
.....

SLISH

GIMME ONE!

OKAY, TAMA-ZAKI!

MMM. TASTY!

LOVE THE SMELL...

...OF BARBE-QUED MEAT.

BUT YOU GOTTA *SPICE* IT WHILE IT'S HOT, YEAH?

NOW THIS *RED* STUFF, SEE, IS MY SPECIAL RECIPE-- *PEPPER* MIXED WITH *VINEGAR.*

FIRST WE DIP THIS HERE *NAIL* IN IT...

NOW... LET'S PLUG THAT HOLE UP SO IT DON'T *BLEED.*

AH...!

ACT

NNG...
AAH...
GGH!

AGKK!
WOMAN!
TALK!

YOUR BRAVE RESISTANCE IS *MEANING-LESS.*

WE CAN ALREADY GUESS WHO HIRED YOU.

?!

THE REST OF YOU MAY NOT KNOW, BUT THESE PEOPLE ONCE ATTACK-ED...

...*MASATSU TAITO.*

HE KILLED BOTH HIS ATTACKERS. BUT WHEN HE QUESTIONED WHO HIRED THEM, AS *WE* DO NOW...

...ONE OF THEM *BROKE.*

AND WITH HIS LAST BREATH...

"*AKAGI.*"

AKAGI...?

I SAID IT BEFORE.

HOW COULD *TWELVE ITTŌ-RYŪ* MEN GO FORTH... AND *ALL* BE DEFEATED?

WHO COULD ASSEMBLE SUCH EXTRA-ORDINARY FIGHTERS...?

ONLY A FAMOUS *SWORDSMAN*... OR A HIGH *OFFICIAL.*

WITH THE FIELD THUS NARROWED, AND A THOUSAND *ITTŌ-RYŪ* SPIES IN EDO...

...SIMPLE *FOOT-WORK* WILL FIND OUR MAN.

SO, WOMAN--

--SAY *NOTHING*, AND *STILL* WE FIND OUT, EVENTUALLY. BUT SAY *NOTHING*... AND WE *KILL* YOU.

SPEAK! BEFORE HE DRIVES IN ANOTHER... AND *ANOTHER.*

"*AKAGI*"... COMPLETE THAT NAME!

AND... HOW MANY ARE YOU?

"AKAGI"...?

.....

.....

DAMN... NEVER HEARD IT... BEFORE...

A SETUP ...?

FUCKING SHOW-OFF...

WAIT... .....

NO... ..... AKAGI?

"AKAGI"... ..... WAS IT?!

HEH

HEH... HEH HEH HA!

AKAGI...? HEY...

MESSAGE FOR MR. AKAGI!!

HUH?!

WHAT THE *FUCK* ARE YOU *LAUGHING* ABOUT?!

AHAHA HAHA HAHA!

CRAZY BITCH...!

HEE HEE HEE!

AKAGI'S ALREADY *HERE*, BOYS!

RIGHT UNDER YOUR *NOSES!*

AND YOU *LOSERS* DON'T EVEN *NOTICE!*

SITTING ON YOUR ASSES IN THIS LOUSY DUMP... *HAH!*

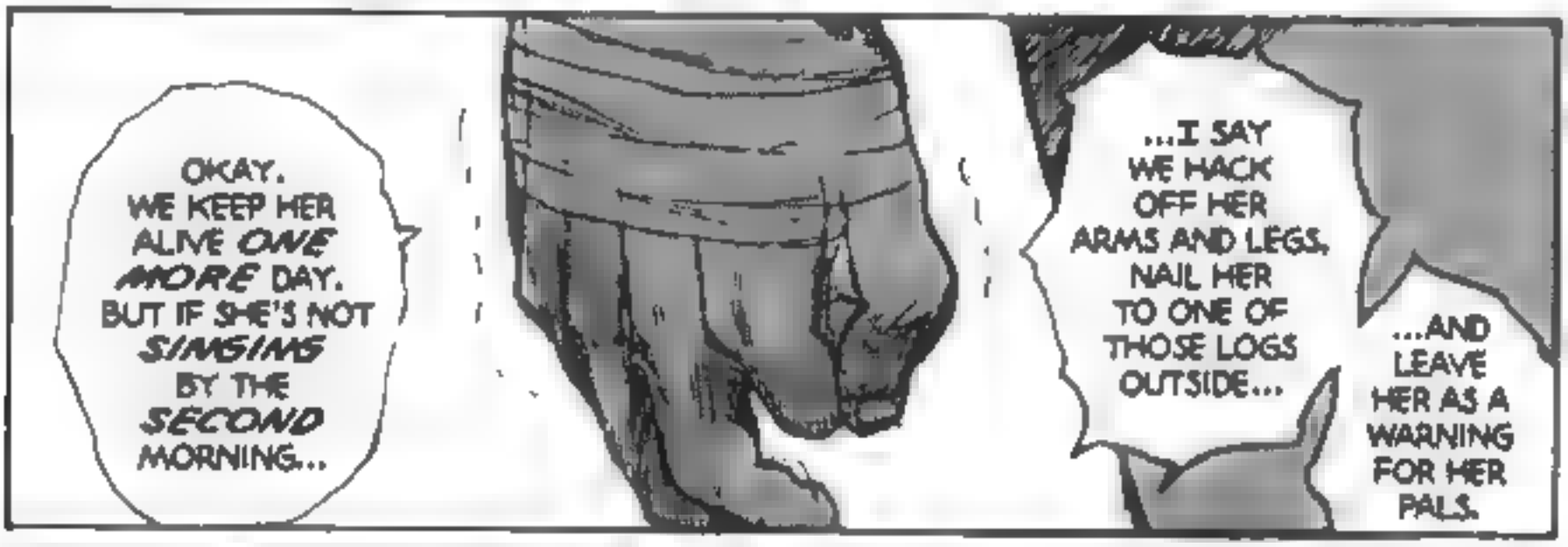
YOU'RE ALL *DEAD MEAT*, YOU STUPID *FUCKERS!*

BUA HAW HAW HAW!

AH....!?

WHAM!

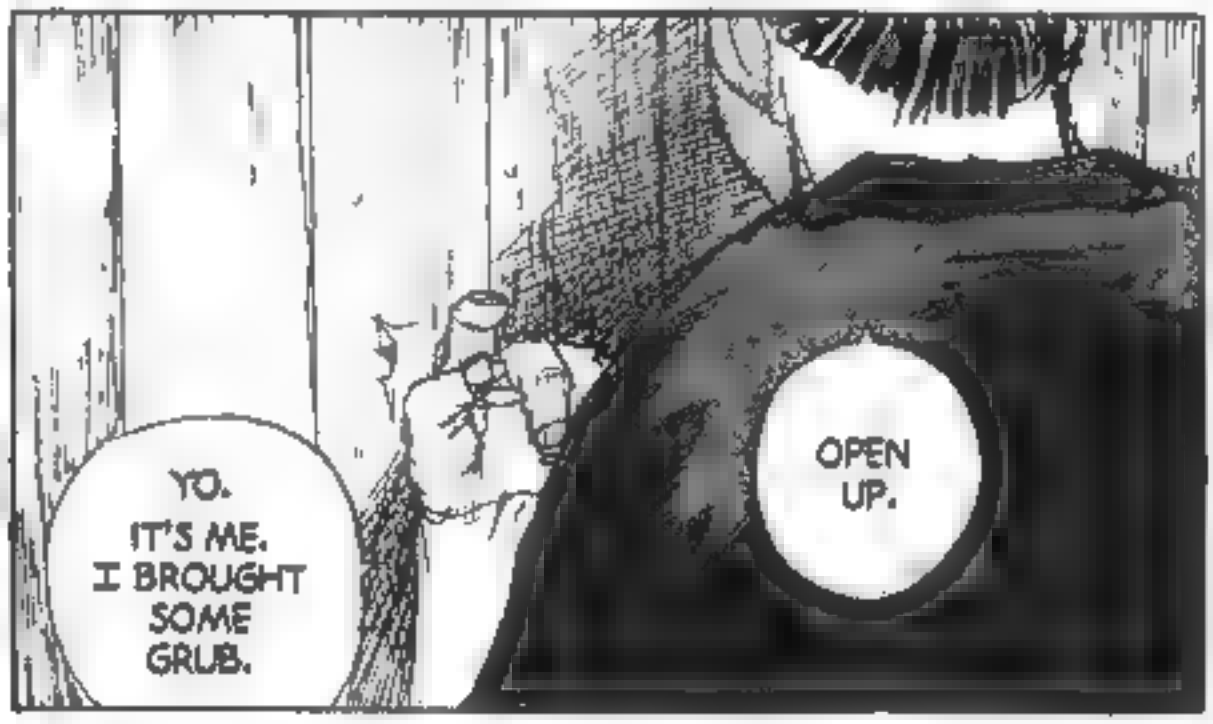
Y-
YOU...
...
YOU FUCKING BITCH.


OKAY. WE KEEP HER ALIVE ONE MORE DAY. BUT IF SHE'S NOT SINGING BY THE SECOND MORNING...
...I SAY WE HACK OFF HER ARMS AND LEGS, NAIL HER TO ONE OF THOSE LOGS OUTSIDE...
...AND LEAVE HER AS A WARNING FOR HER PALS.

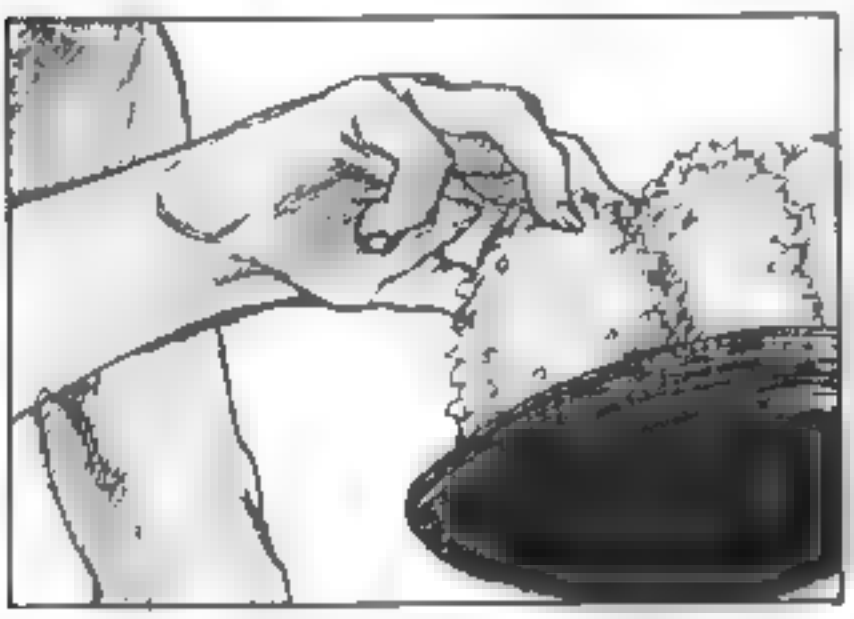
YOU GUYS WITH ME?!

BEASTS
Part 3

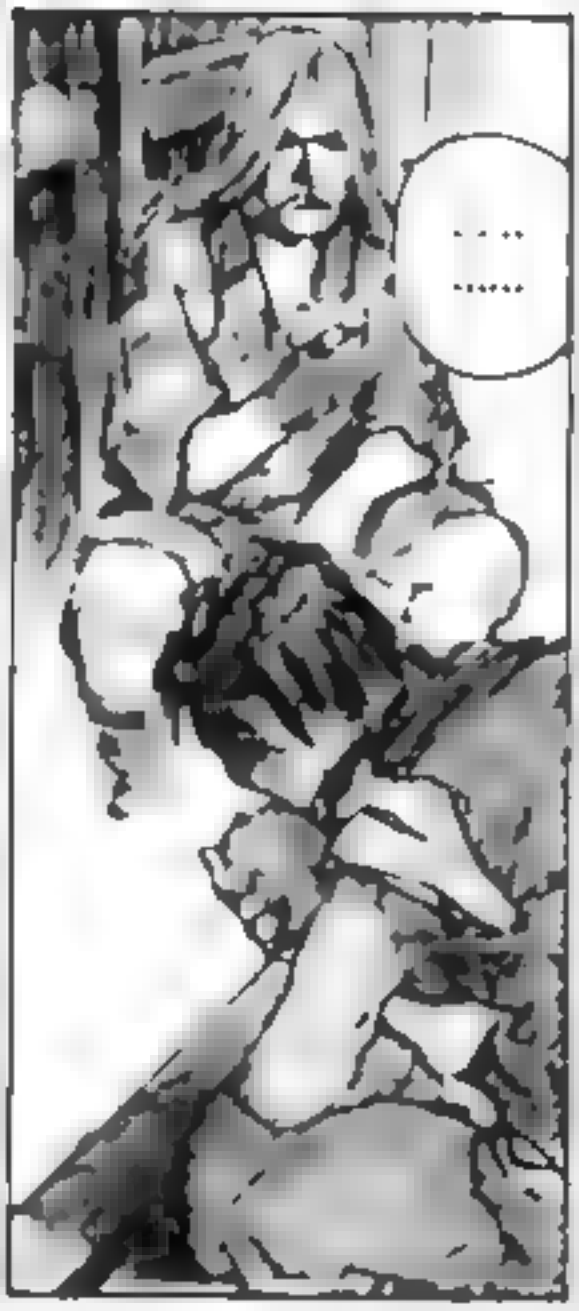
=yawwn=


YO.
IT'S ME.
I BROUGHT
SOME
GRUB.
OPEN
UP.

.....
.....
.....



THANKS.
NO PROB.


.....

TOO.

FINISH IT WITH THE NEXT ROUND.
NO MORE.

WE'VE WAITED LONG ENOUGH. NO MORE TIME TO WASTE.

THE WOMAN'S ON THE EDGE OF CRACKING.

IF SHE DOESN'T TALK, SHE'S FATED TO DIE.

DON'T HOLD BACK-- *MAIM* HER IF NEED BE.

.....
.....

NOW, *THAT'S* THE FACE OF DESPAIR.

HEH, HEH...

DON'T FREAK, BABE.

I AIN'T GONNA *CHOP* ANYTHING. THE SHAPE *YOU'RE* IN... YOU'D PROBABLY JUST *CROAK*.

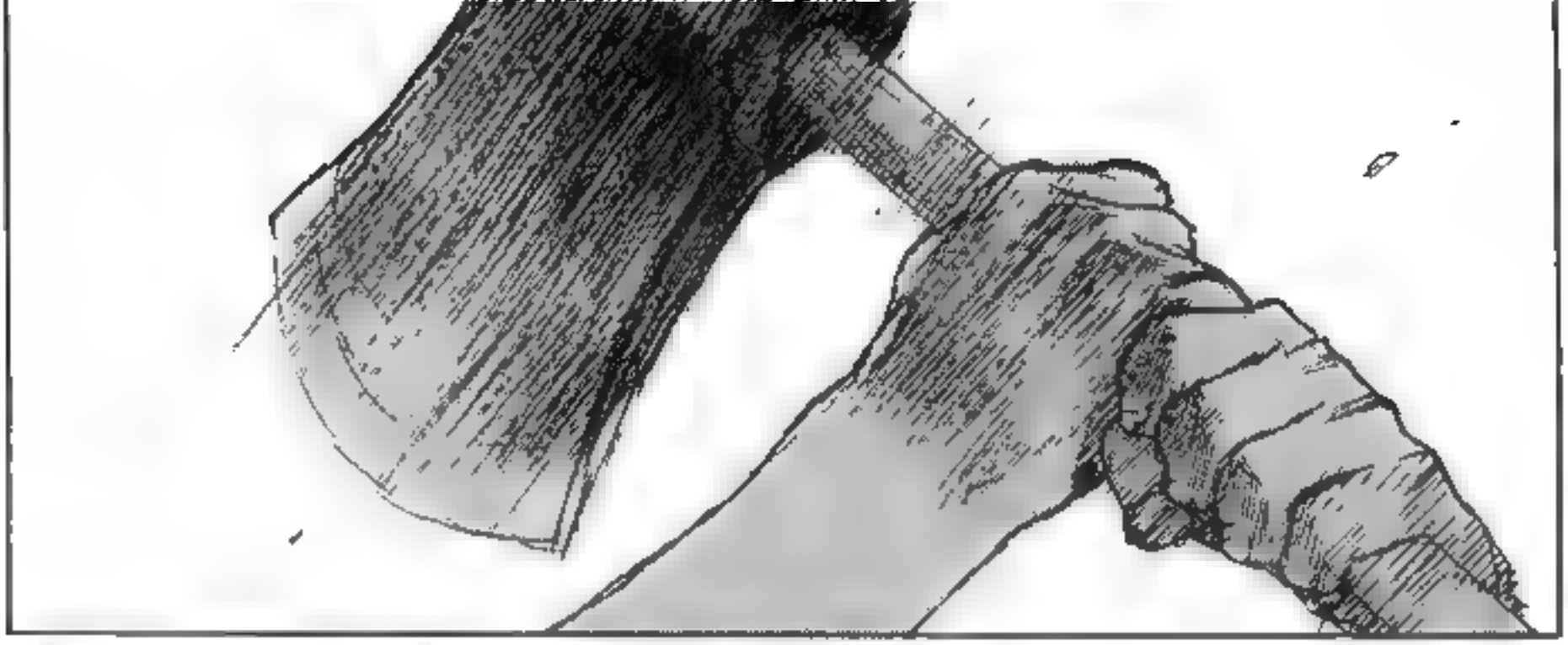
.....
.....

BUT... *DYING*, AND WHAT *I'M* GONNA DO...

SHIT-- DON'T YOU *GET IT*, YOU STUPID BITCH?

WE'RE GONNA GET YOUR BOSS *ANYWAY*, SO WHY NOT *TALK*?!

AH...
AH...
KRIKK
NNK
PUGH!!
TALK!!
TALK, DAMN IT! TALK!
NOW WE DO WHAT-EVER WE WANT!
GET IT NOW, BITCH? ALL BETS ARE OFF!
.....
.....



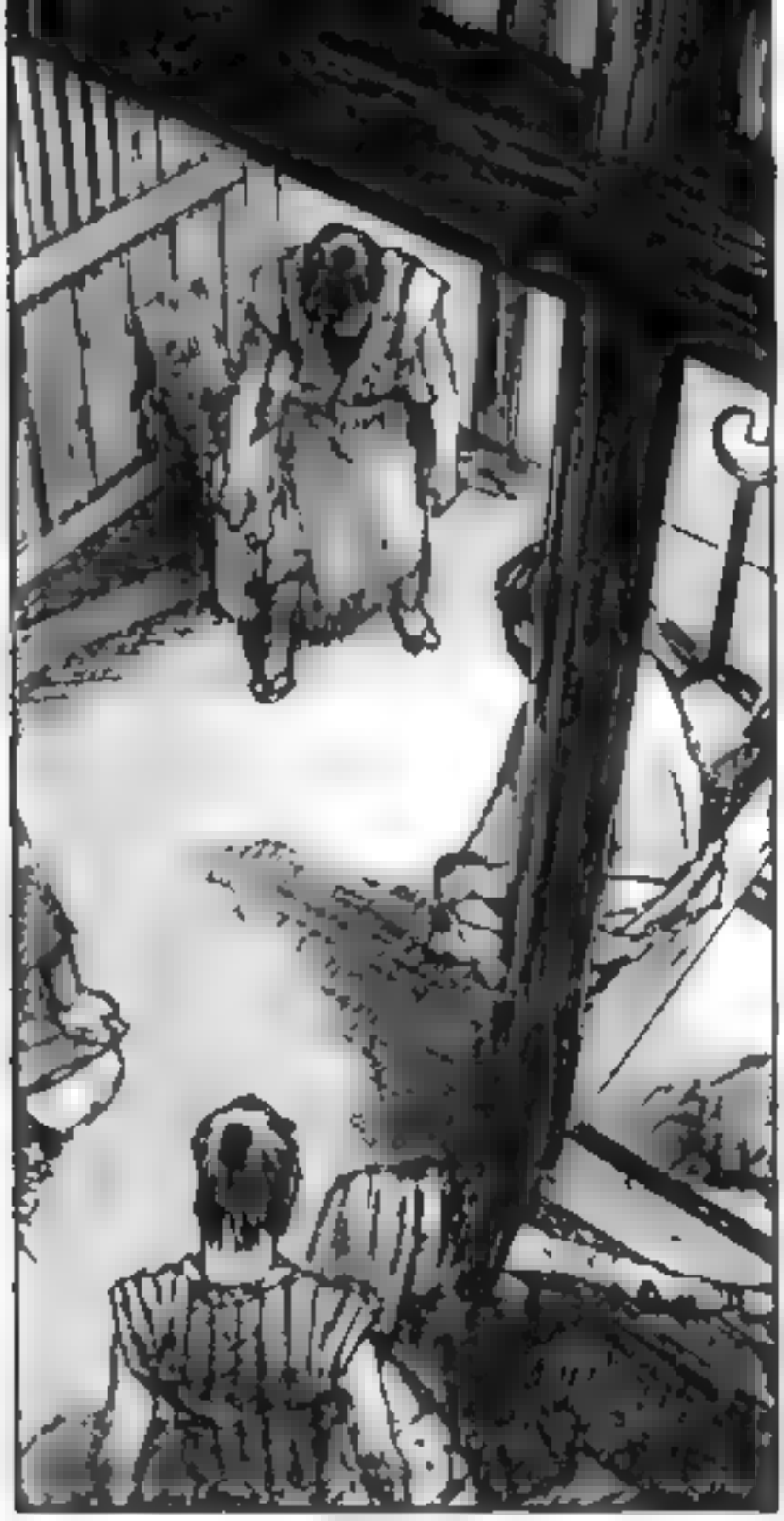
AAUGH!
CRAK

AAH!
NNG...
tick

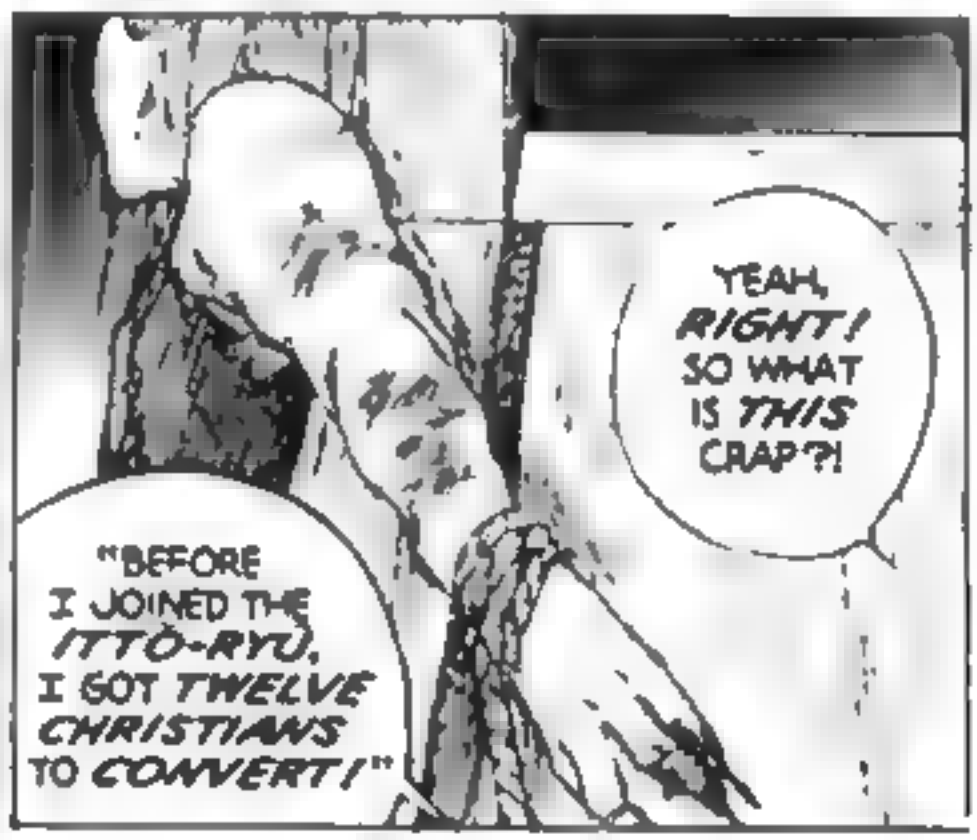
EE YAH

WELL, KINUKA..? CONVINCED YET?
AKUN... ?!

SHE AIN'T GONNA CRACK!
LET'S JUST KILL THE SLUT AND—
HEY, TŌJŌ!



SO YOU WERE FULL OF SHIT, HUH?!
YOU USELESS FUCK!


"BEFORE I JOINED THE ITTŌ-RYŪ, I GOT TWELVE CHRISTIANS TO CONVERT!"
YEAH, RIGHT! SO WHAT IS THIS CRAP?!

LISTEN, ASSHOLE. IF I HAD FIVE, SIX DAYS, THERE ARE WAYS!
BETTER WAYS! YOU GOTTA BREAK 'EM IN THE HEAD, NOT THE BODY!

SHIT... IF WE HAD TIME, WE COULD'A STAYED AT THE BATH HOUSE.
TAKEN TURNS AT IT, KEPT HER AWAKE, PLAYED "GOOD GUY, BAD GUY"...
THEN LET'S JUST RAPE HER!

FOR THE *ITTŌ-RYŪ!*

LOOK... TŌJŌ... KINUKA... WE'RE DOING THIS FOR OUR *BUDDIES*, RIGHT?

BUT WHILE *WE'RE* SWEATING AWAY IN THIS *FURNACE*...

...THE BOSS IS PROBABLY KICKING BACK IN SOME KAGA *HOT SPRING!*

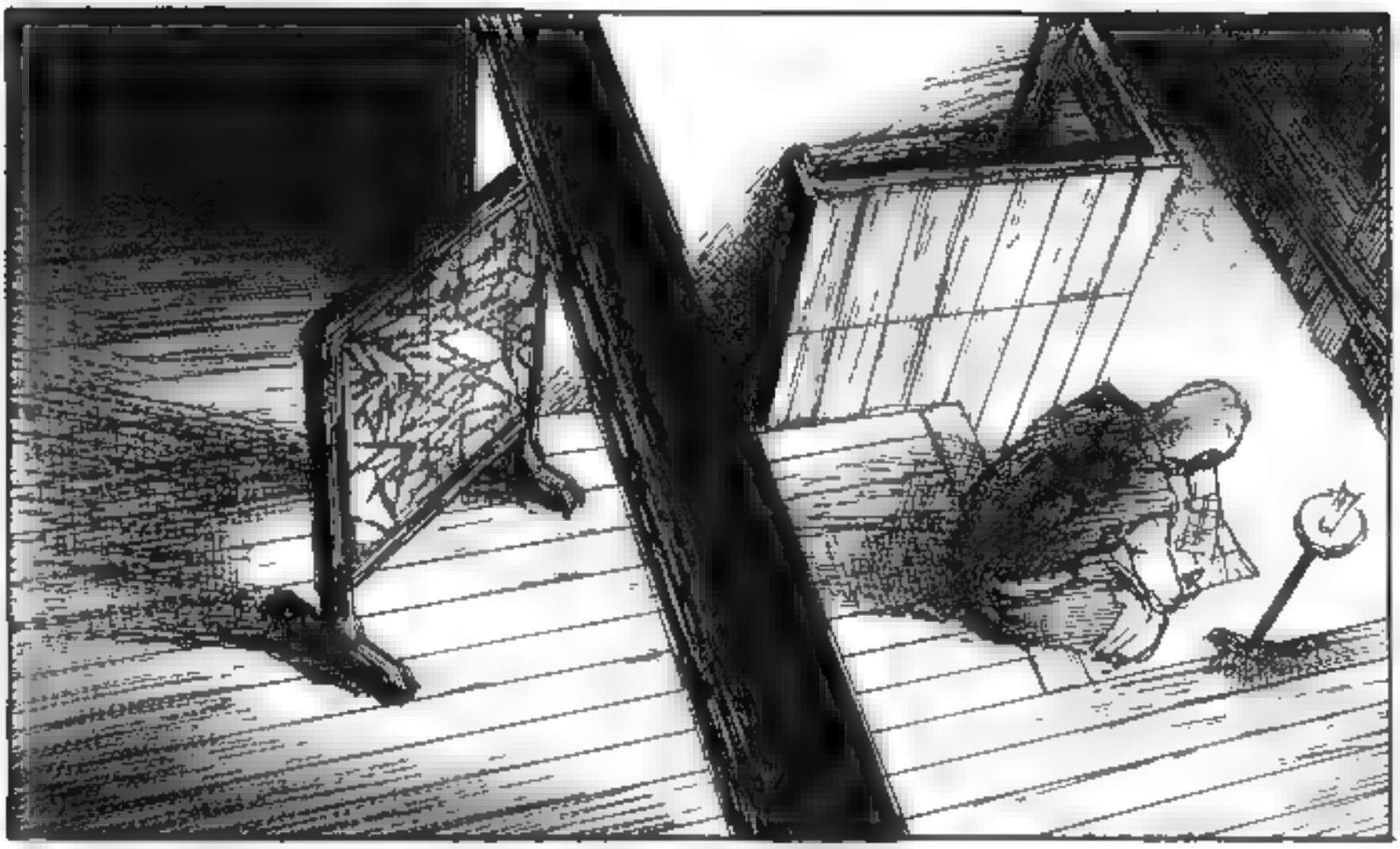
WE'RE TAKIN' THIS TOO FUCKIN' *SERIOUS*, *DAMN* IT!

WORKIN' OUR ASSES OFF FOR WHAT?! *NOTHIN'!!*

IF WE DON'T AT LEAST GET *SOME-THING* OUT OF THIS BITCH...

...THAT OLD FART ABAYAMA IS GONNA LAUGH HIS ASS OFF AT US!

HRM.



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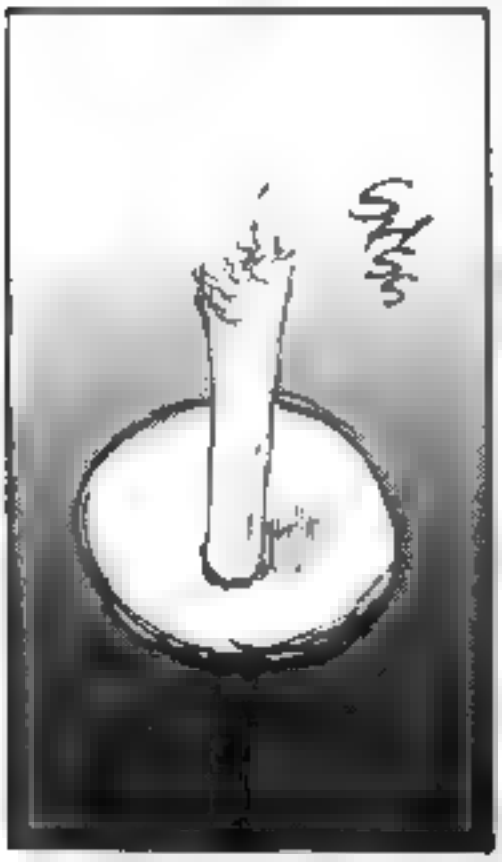
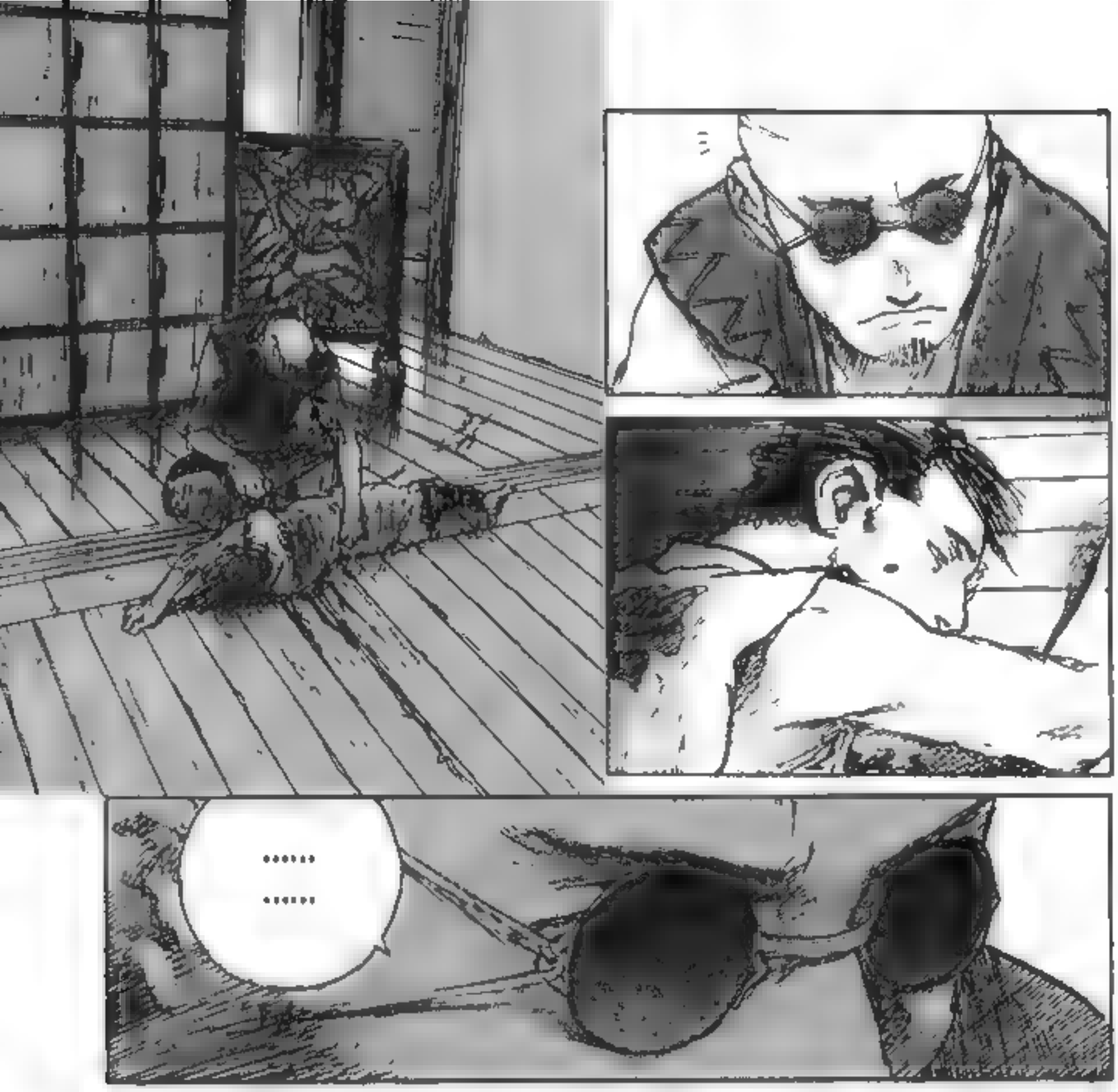


BEFORE HIS BODY STARTS TO GO...
MAYBE BURY *SHINRIJI* NEXT...


.....
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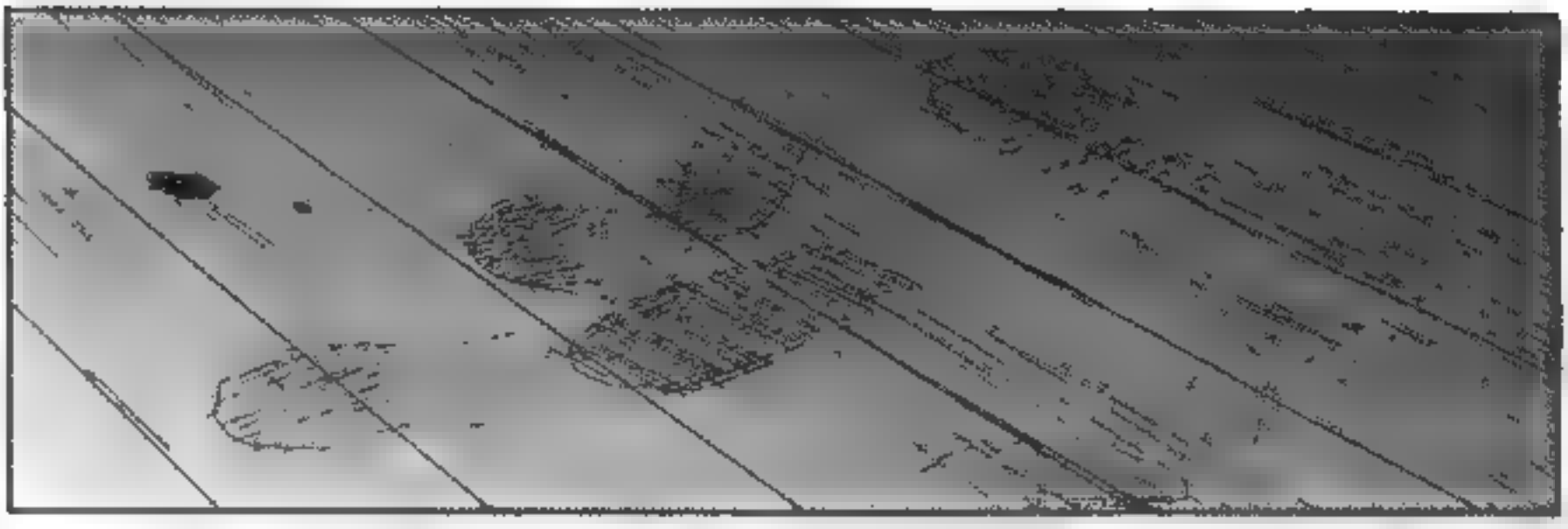
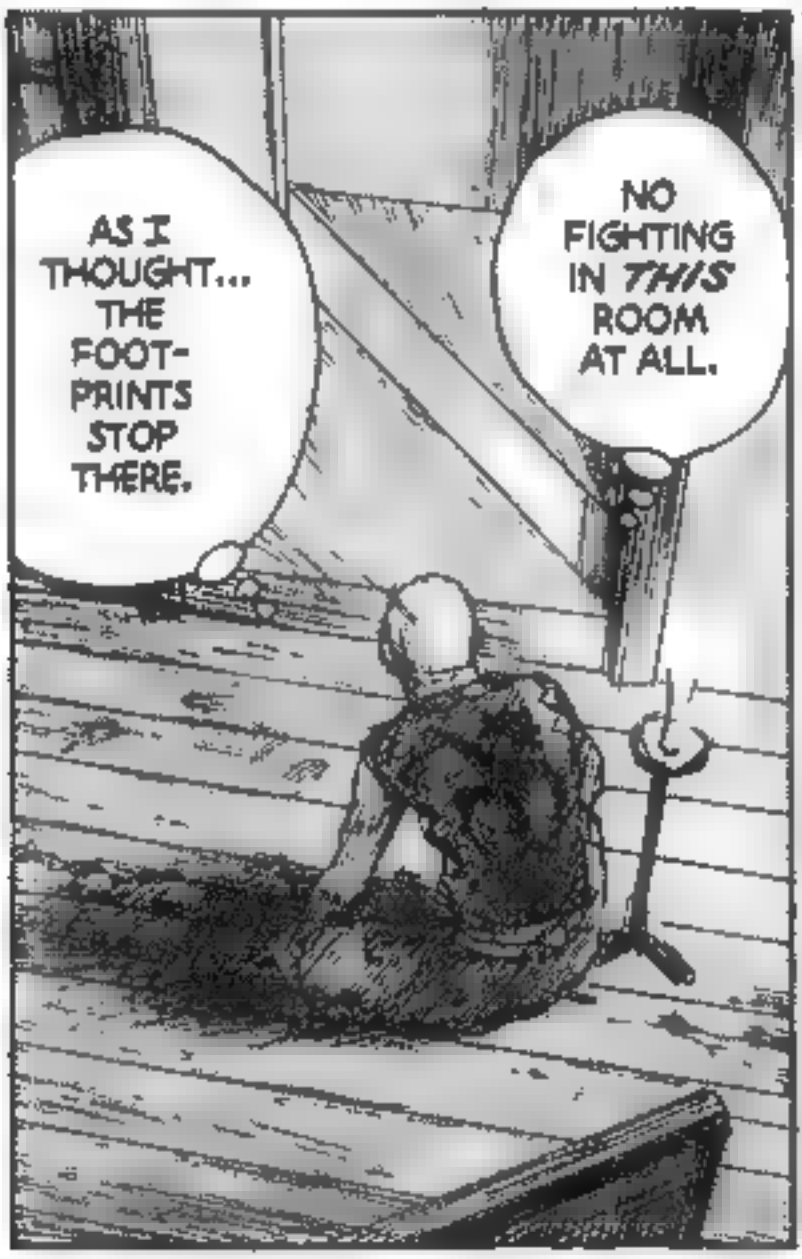
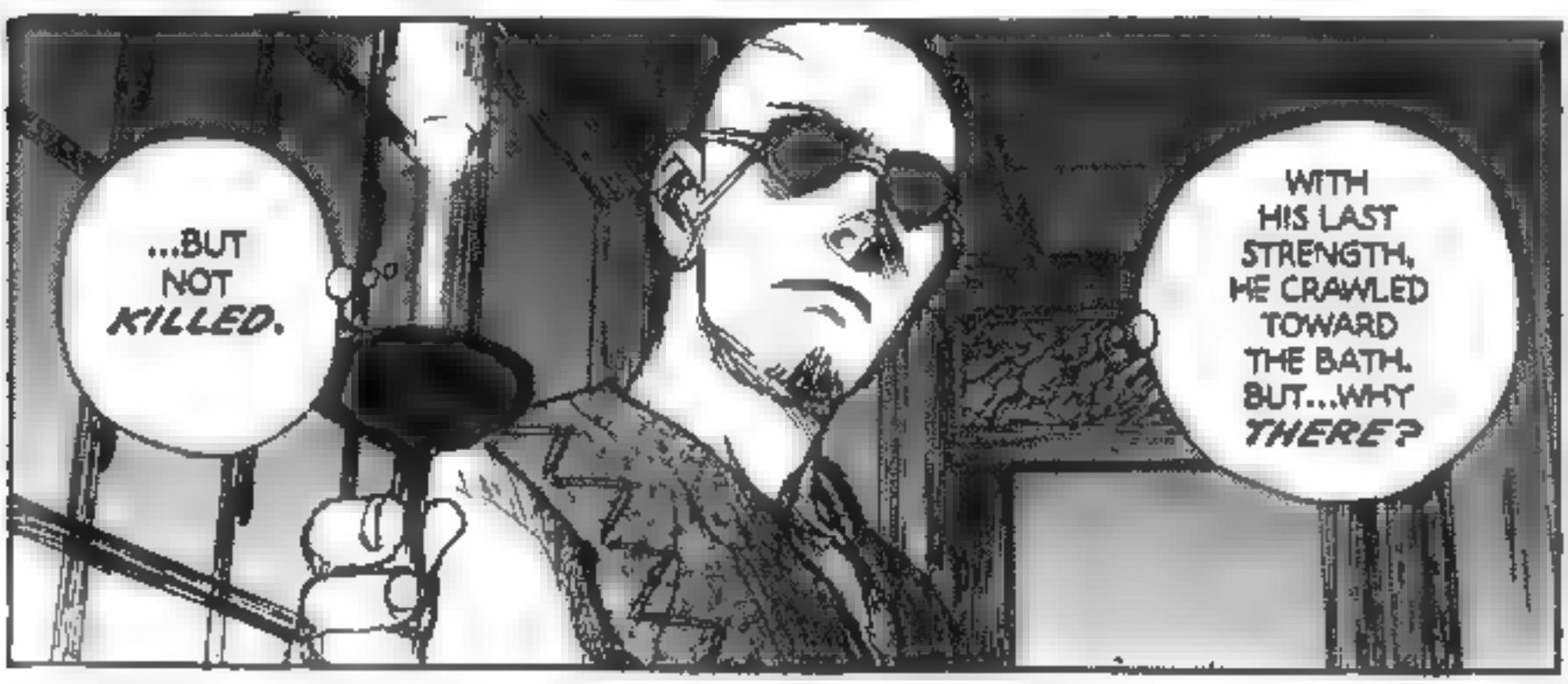
SOME-
THING'S
WRONG.
WHY
DIE LIKE
THIS?




AS I THOUGHT... THE FOOT-PRINTS STOP THERE.
NO FIGHTING IN *THIS* ROOM AT ALL.

NO QUESTION.
SHINRIJI WAS CUT UP *THERE*...


...BUT NOT *KILLED*.
WITH HIS LAST STRENGTH, HE CRAWLED TOWARD THE BATH. BUT...WHY *THERE*?

IF HE COULD MOVE, HE COULD HAVE GONE *OUTSIDE*, MAYBE BE SEEN BY SOMEONE.

HE MIGHT HAVE *SURVIVED*. SO IF HE DIDN'T *TRY*...

...HE WANTED *ME* TO SEE HIS CORPSE...?

SO I'D *LEARN* SOMETHING FROM HOW HE DIED...?

THEN... THIS *HAND*...

HYAKURIN, I WANT YOU TO *RUN* HIM FOR ME. DO YOUR BEST.

BLRK! *WHAT?!*

HIS NAME IS... JUST CALL HIM *SHINRIJI*.

FROM NOW ON, THIS MAN WORKS, EATS AND LIVES WITH YOU.

LOOK... I DON'T THINK I'M RIGHT FOR THE JOB.

I...I'M NOT GOOD AT BEING *NICE*.

NONSENSE. YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN DO IT.

THINK! GIICHI OR SHIRA...ARE *THEY* GOING TO BOTHER TEACHING HIM ANYTHING? MAKOTO IS TOO YOUNG...

...AND ASHIYA AND KUZUYA CAN BARELY HOLD THEIR OWN.

SIR, I'M NOT DENYING... LOOK, I JUST *HATE* TAKING *CARE* OF PEOPLE! GOT IT?

HYAKURIN... YOU'RE GOOD WITH YOUR BOW. DAMN GOOD. BUT FRANKLY, YOUR SWORDWORK IS *INEPT*.

SORRY TO BE BLUNT, BUT... I'M MERELY SAYING THIS FOR *YOUR* SAKE.

I'M HOPING THIS MAN CAN *COMPEN-SATE...*

...FOR THIS WEAKNESS OF YOURS, SHINRIJI ...?

AH?! MA'AM, I--

SHUT UP. ARE YOU GOOD WITH A BLADE?

NO, MA'AM! NOT, NOT, NO *WAY,* MA'AM! I BARELY KNOW--

SHUT UP. *MODEST,* ISN'T HE?

NOT EXACTLY.

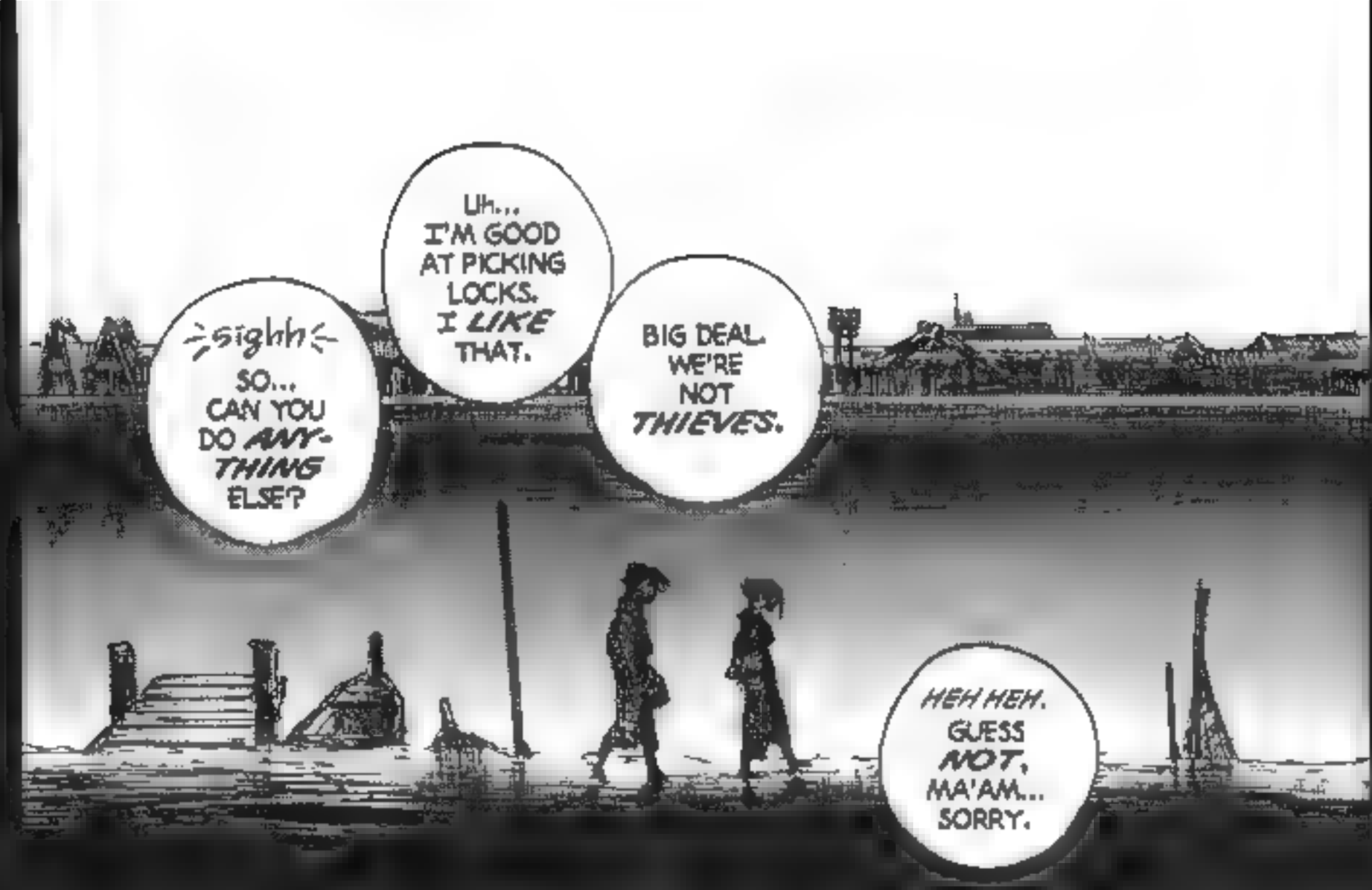
LET'S JUST SAY HE HAS EXCEP-TIONAL... *POTEN-TIAL.*

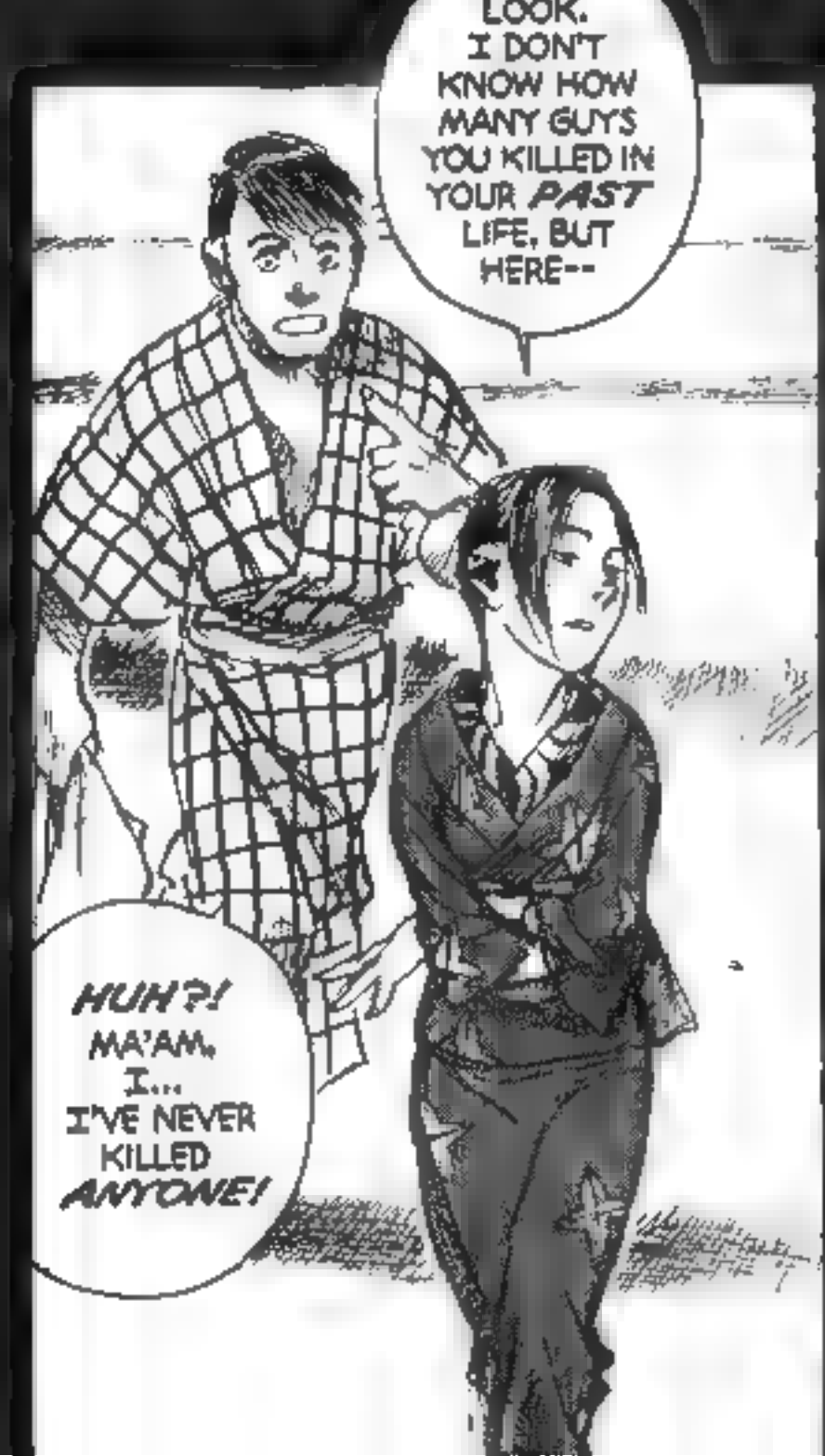
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT.

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST... WE SIMPLY NEED *MAN-POWER.*

[redacted] PROMISING AND GIFTED YOUNG MEN LIKE HIM. BUT... *DIAMOND* OR *GLASS,* IT'S UP TO *YOU.*

VERY AMUSING, SIR. SHALL I THANK YOU NOW OR LATER...?


=sighh=
SO... CAN YOU DO ANY-THING ELSE?
Uh... I'M GOOD AT PICKING LOCKS. I LIKE THAT.
BIG DEAL. WE'RE NOT THIEVES.
HEH HEH. GUESS NOT, MA'AM... SORRY.


LOOK. I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY GUYS YOU KILLED IN YOUR PAST LIFE, BUT HERE--
HUH?! MA'AM, I... I'VE NEVER KILLED ANYONE!

SAY WHAT?!
WELL, UH, RIGHT OUTTA SWORD SCHOOL, I SIGNED UP AS A BODYGUARD WITH THIS SILK MERCHANT, SEE?

...HE CUT MY WAGES!
MY BOSS THERE, HE WAS, LIKE, THIS TOTAL CHEAPSKATE. WHEN I DIDN'T SPEND ALL MY PAY... SO I COULD SEND SOME HOME, SEE?

LET ME GUESS--SO YOU *QUIT*... AND LIFTED SOME CASH ON YOUR WAY OUT.

RIGHT! *AMAZING!* YOU *NAILED* IT!

'COURSE, I WAS WORRIED 'BOUT GETTING *CAUGHT*, SO I ONLY TOOK NINE *RYŌ*, TWO *MON*.

SEE, I'D HEARD YOU DIDN'T GET *DEATH* FOR STEALING UNDER TEN *RYŌ*.

BUT I HAD ABOUT ONE *RYŌ* IN SAVINGS, AND THEY SAID I STOLE *THAT*, TOO! SO...

OH, *MAN*... HE'S A COMPLETE *MORON*.

EH...? *HMM*...

OH, *YEAH!* WASN'T THAT A COUPLE YEARS BACK? YEAH, I READ ABOUT IT IN THE *KAWARA-BAN*.

YOU HEAR ABOUT THAT *SAMURAI* WHO KILLED A HUNDRED COPS AND GOT AWAY?

THINK ABOUT IT. THERE ARE POOR *SAPS* LIKE *YOU* OUT THERE...

...LOSING THEIR HEADS FOR *CHUMP CHANGE*.

AND THEN THIS GUY... *SCOT FREE* AFTER OFFING *ONE HUN-DRED!*

SO WHAT *DECIDES* IT? FATE? *DESTINY?*

WOW, YOU SOUND LIKE MY *GRANNY!*

HAH HAH HAH

AHH, SHADDUP.

AAH ?!

WHAT? *WHAT?!*

H... H... HYA... *HYAKU-RIN,* MA'AM...

YOUR... YOUR *HAIR!*

Uh... THE GUYS'LL BE COMING BACK SOON...
AH! S- SORRY!

YOUR MOTHER WAS *REALLY* A NATURAL *BLONDE* ?!

STILL, THAT'S ALMOST *TOO* FREAKY.

SHE... SHE WAS A *RASHA-MEN'S* DAUGHTER.

SHE EVEN HAD *BLUE EYES.*

WITH LOOKS LIKE THAT, AND HER WEIRD NAME, SHE COULD NEVER FIND DECENT WORK.

WHEN I WAS STILL LITTLE, SHE HAD TO COUNT EVERY PENNY. LIFE WAS PRETTY HARD, I GUESS.

Sigh

I GUESS IF I WASN'T SO USELESS...

...I COULD'A MADE THINGS MORE *COMFORT-ABLE* FOR HER.

SO, WHERE IS SHE *NOW?*

OH, DEAD 'N' *GONE!*

ABOUT A YEAR BACK

YOUR *AGES* ARE, LIKE, *TOTALLY* DIFFERENT, OF COURSE... BUT WHEN I SEE *YOU*, MA'AM, WITH YOUR *HAIR*...

...AND YOUR *ATTITUDE*, AND THE WAY YOU *TALK*, WELL...

THIS ISN'T MY *REAL* HAIR COLOR, YOU KNOW. I BLEACHED IT.

IT SMELLS *FUNNY*, RIGHT...?

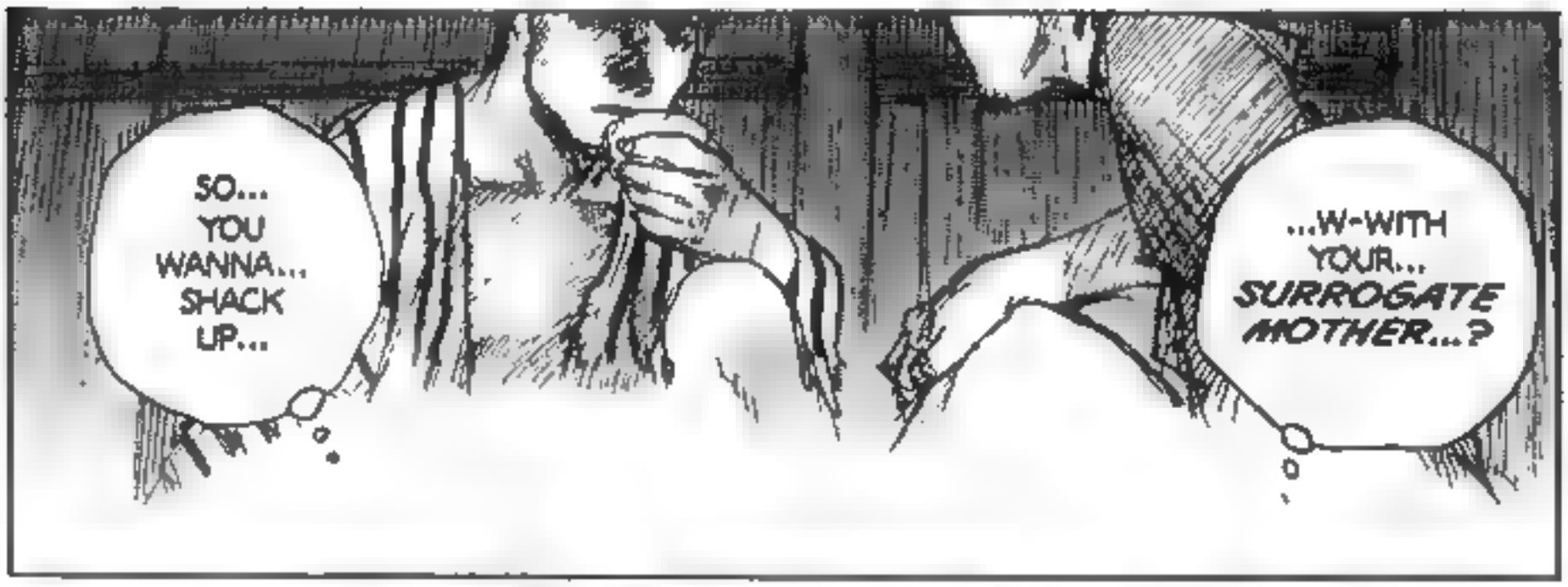
NOT ENOUGH TO BOTHER *ME!* NO, MA'AM!

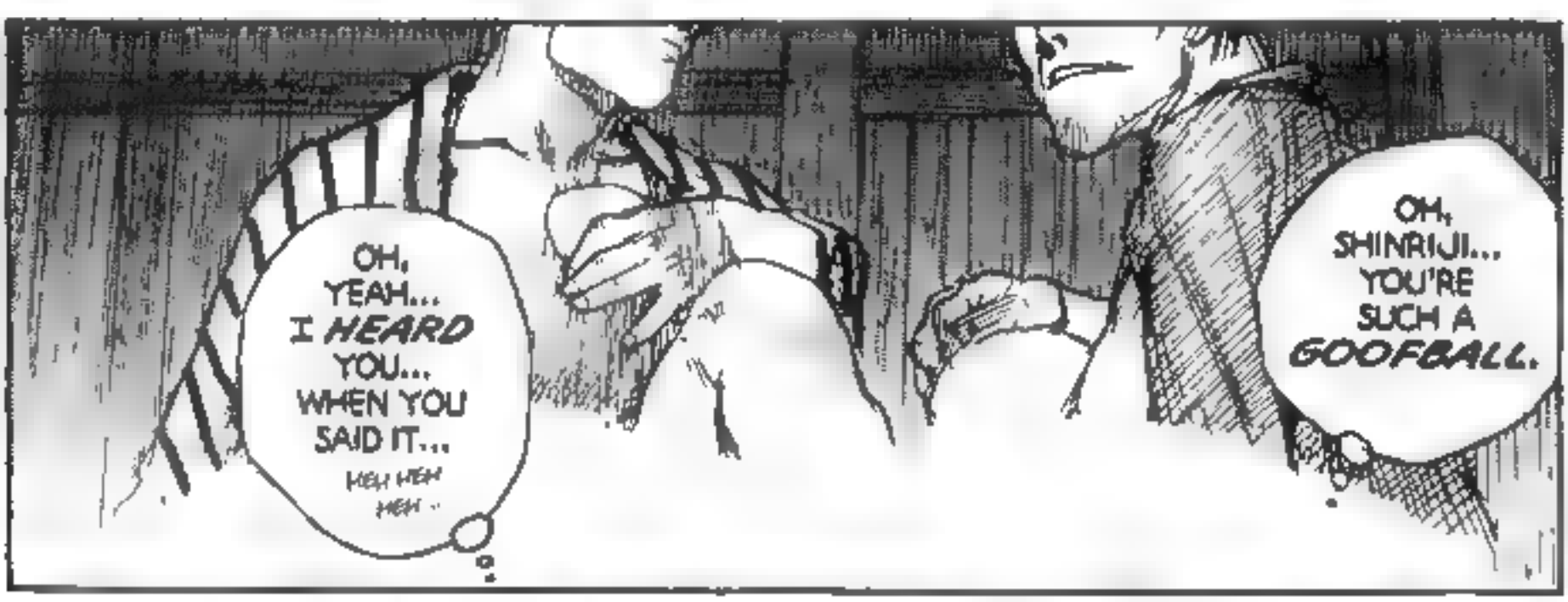
IT'S LIKE, *NOW* I REALLY FEEL LIKE WORKING MY *BUTT* OFF FOR YOU! SORTA LIKE, I TREATED MY *MOM* SO BAD...

...AND NOW I GOT A *SECOND CHANCE*, SEE?

HEH HEH HEH

.....
.....


SO... YOU WANNA... SHACK UP...
...W-WITH YOUR... SURROGATE MOTHER...?


OH, YEAH... I HEARD YOU... WHEN YOU SAID IT...
HEH HEH HEH...
OH, SHINRIJI... YOU'RE SUCH A GOOFBALL.

HUH? WHAT'S UP?

WHOA?!
HEY! BACK OFF, MAN!

GOD... DAMN... BITCH! SHE WAS SMILING! FUCKING SMILING!!

P- PISSES ME OFF!!

hhk

koff koff

huff

. . . .

SH... SHANE...?

YOU'RE... STILL *ALIVE*... R.GHT?

R-REMEMBER... *NEVER* TELL YOUR MOTHER...

...ABOUT YOUR LADY LOVE... *BEFORE* SHE SAYS SHE'LL MARRY YOU...

BEASTS

ORDER, SIR?

YEAH... GIMME TWENTY SKEWERS. SOME SWEET, SOME SPICY. MIX 'EM UP.

BOUGHT SOME FOOD DOWN THE STREET *YESTERDAY*, TOO, DIDN'T YA?

HUH?

Uh...YEAH, GUESS SO.

WELL, BEEN DOING A LOT A' HOT BABES... TAKES IT OUT OF A GUY, Y'KNOW?

HEH... TOUGH BEIN' A PLAYBOY, EH?

AIN'T EXACTLY *COOL* OUT HERE, BUT BEATS THE SHIT OUT OF THAT STINKIN' *SHACK*.

:ahewf:

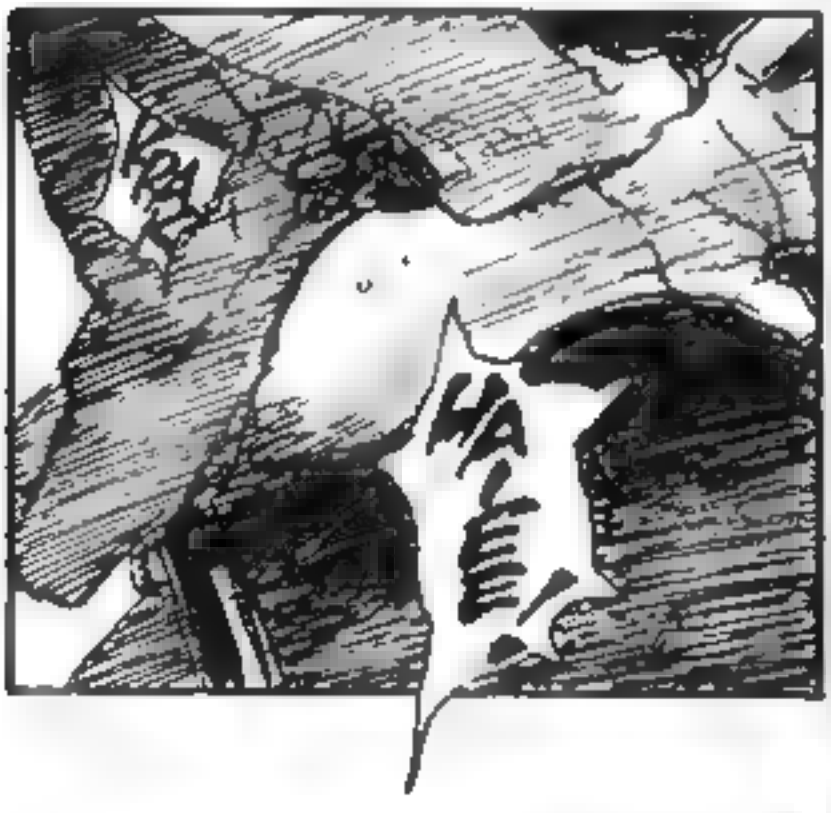
MAN, I'M *DYIN'* IN THERE. DON'T KNOW HOW THOSE OTHER GUYS KEEP AT HER...

SHIT... MAYBE IT'S HARDER FOR ME 'CAUSE I'M *FAT*?

GURK?!

HKK!

H-
HEY?!
WHO THE FUCK--


HA-EE!

I HAVE A QUES-TION.
IF YOU WISH TO LIVE... ANSWER WITH THE TRUTH.

YOU ARE PART OF THE GANG THAT HIT A BATH HOUSE TWO NIGHTS AGO.

IT WAS IN *KODENMA-CHŌ*. THEY CUT DOWN ONE MAN, KIDNAPPED A WOMAN, AND VANISHED.

I DON'T KNOW *NOTHING!* I NEVER--

THAT IS NOT MY QUESTION.

I CONSIDER YOUR INVOLVE-MENT *FACT.*

NOW... THE FINGERS OF THE MAN YOU LEFT... POINTED A CERTAIN DIRECTION.

"*SOUTH-EAST*, TOWARDS *TATSUMI*, HERE IN FUKAGAWA.

"WOULD THEY CHOOSE THE RED LIGHT DISTRICT, OR THE LUMBER YARDS BEYOND...?"

FOR A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WOULDN'T SEE YOU...

...WHERE NO ONE WOULD HEAR THE SCREAMS OF THE *TORTURED*... I WOULD CHOOSE THE YARDS.

ON THIS BODY...

...THREE SMELLS.

ONE, THE LINGERING SMELL FROM HAVING A WOMAN.

TWO, THE SMELL OF WOOD.

SO *WHAT?* I'VE LIVED HERE FOR *YEARS!*

WHAT THE HELL DO YOU *EXPECT?*

LUMBER YARDS OUT *BACK*, BROTHELS DOWN THE *STREET!*

WHAT'S SO STRANGE ABOUT--

YES. *PERSUA-SIVE.*

BUT THERE IS THE *THIRD* SMELL...

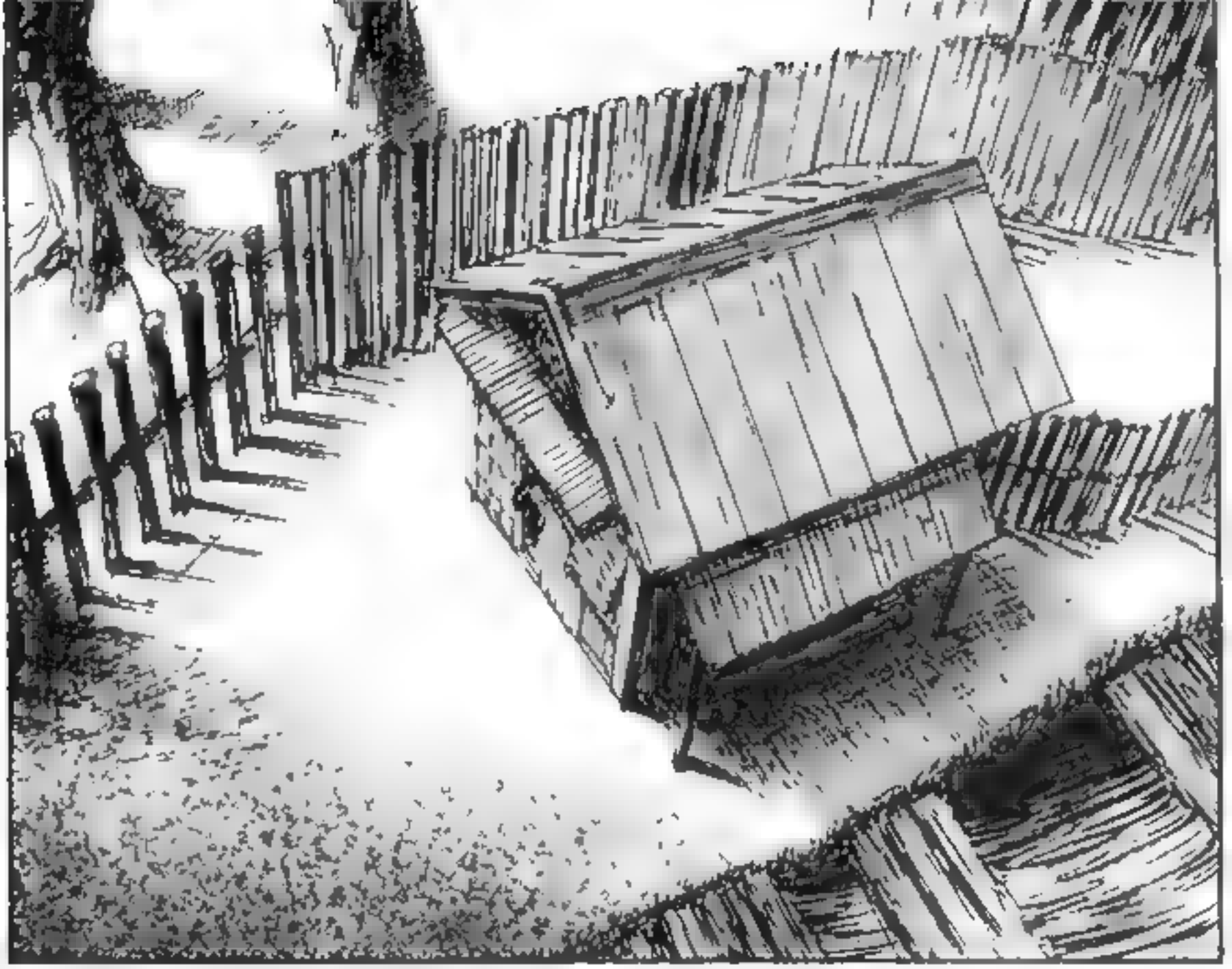
...OF WHICH I SPOKE. A UNIQUE ODOR.

THE WOMAN I SEEK USED A CERTAIN CHEMICAL TO BLEACH HER HAIR. IT IS A QUITE *UNMISTAK-ABLE* SMELL.

YOU HAVE BEEN... *CLOSE ENOUGH* TO THIS WOMAN TO HAVE ACQUIRED THE SCENT.

NOW TO THE QUESTION-- YOUR *FRIENDS* OR YOUR *LIFE*...

...WHICH DO YOU CHOOSE?



LOOKS LIKE IT'S *MALE BONDING* TIME, HUH? GROUP *PISS!*
RIGHT, *BRO?*
CUT THAT "*BRO*" SHIT... I AIN'T YOUR BROTHER.

MAN... THAT TAMASAKI... HE'S DONE HER FRONT, BACK, AND SIDEWAYS.

HE'S A *TWISTED* BASTARD, THAT'S FOR SURE.

BUT WHADDYA *EXPECT?*

EVER SINCE HE GOT FUCKED UP, HE'S BEEN A HEAD CASE.

HEY...LAST TIME I WAS DOING HER, DON'CHA THINK SHE WAS GETTING INTO IT?

ARE YOU *NUTS*, MAN?

SHE WAS JUST FLOPPING AROUND 'CAUSE WE WERE TWISTING THAT *ARM* YOU BUSTED UP.

ANYWAY, TŌJŌ...

...HOW LONG DO WE KEEP THIS UP?

.....

.....

IT'S BAD ENOUGH IF HER BUDDIES TRACK US DOWN.

BUT *SOMEBODY'S* GOTTA OWN THAT SHACK. IF THEY SEND THE COPS AROUND AND WE *ALL* GET ROUNDED UP... THE BOSS'LL KILL US.

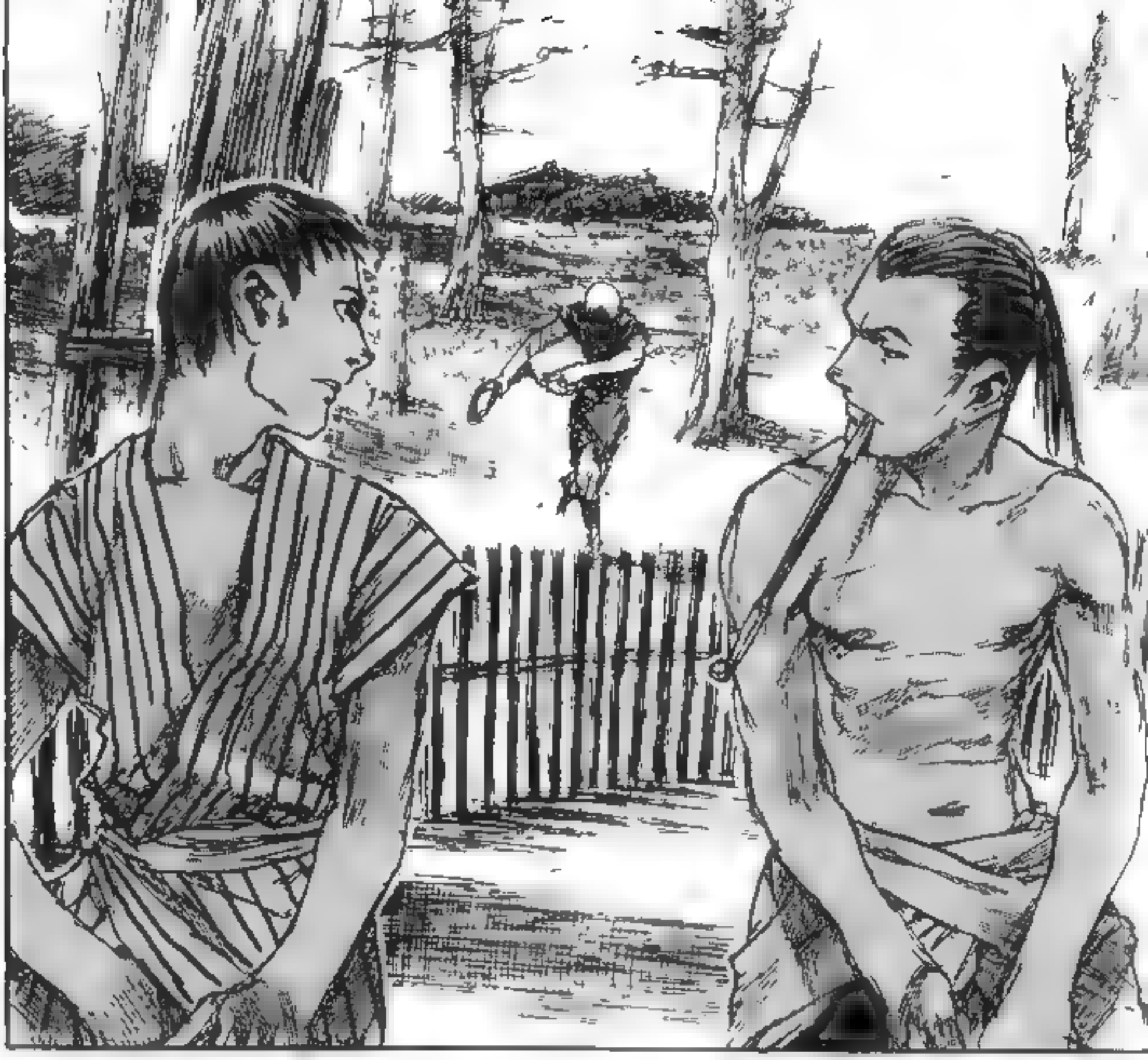
YEAH... YOU'RE RIGHT.

WE'LL WHACK HER THIS--

krik

WHAT'S UP...?

DUNNO. I--



AW, *SHIT!* THEY FOUND US!!

?! WHAT *IS* THAT FUCKING THING?

AAH?!

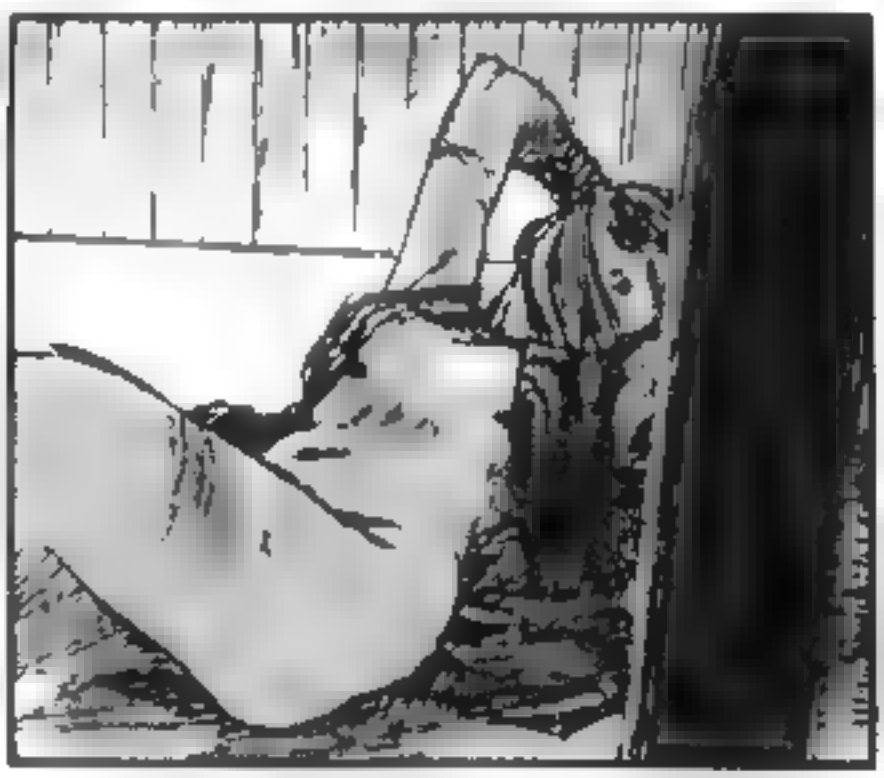
HURRY UP AN' *GET* HIM!

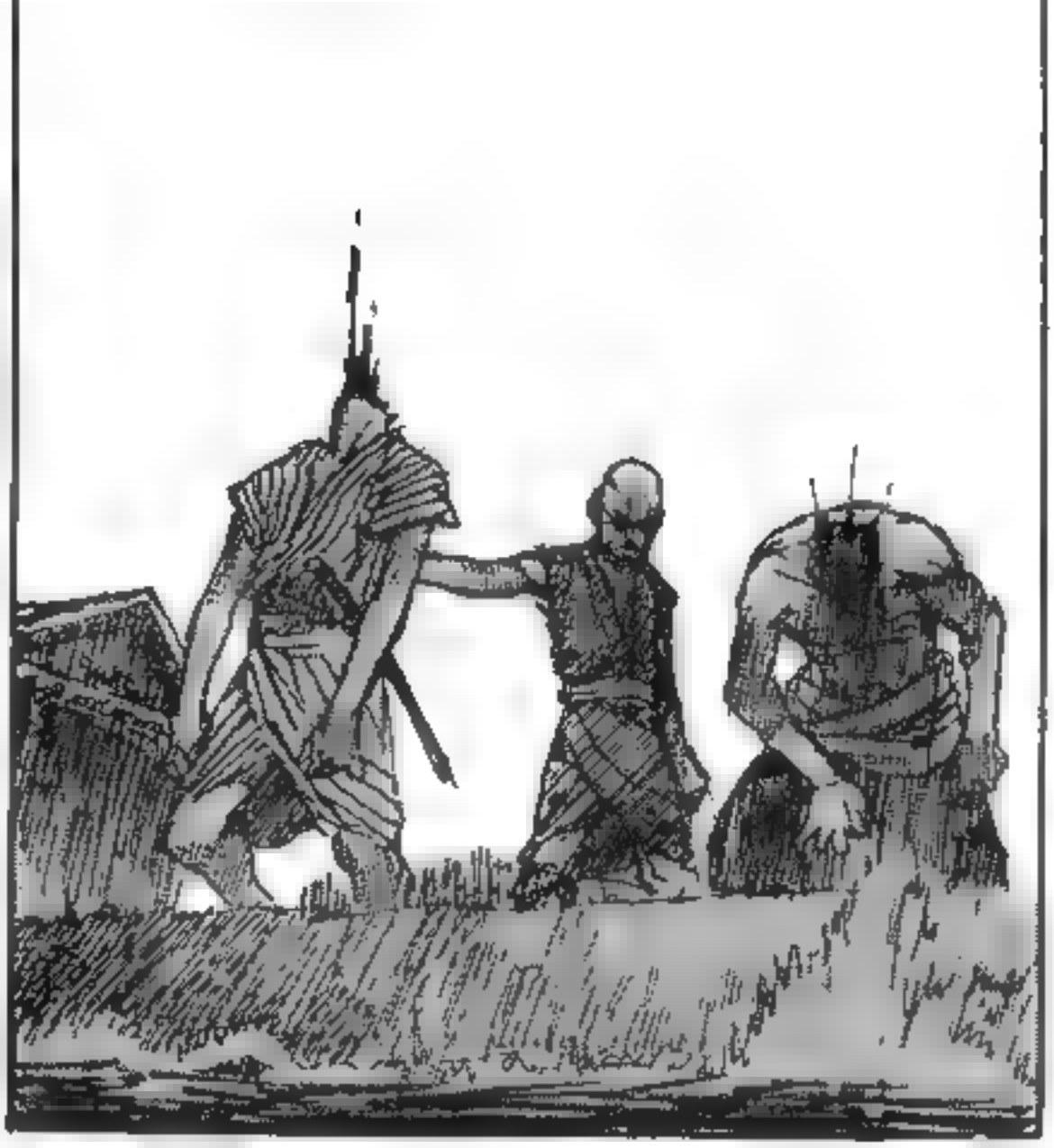
OH MAN!

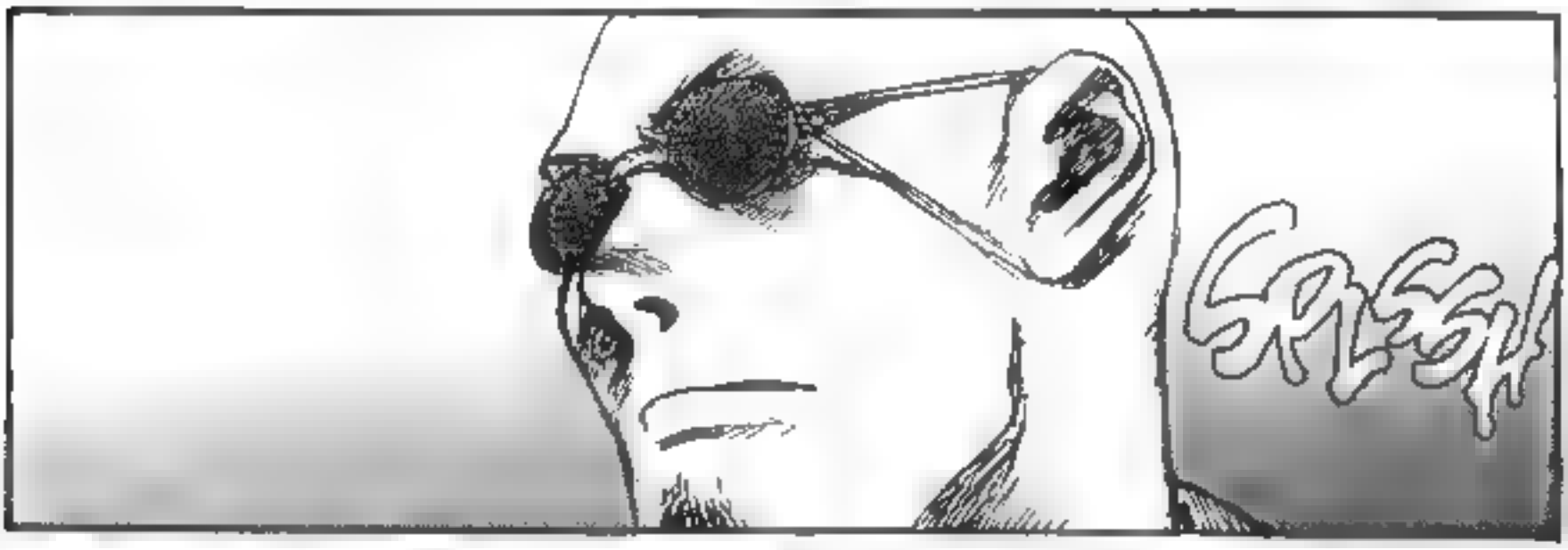
B-BUT I AIN'T *DONE* YET!

DID YOU HEAR SOME-THING...?
HUH...?

MAYBE NOT.
PERHAPS JUST... NERVES.



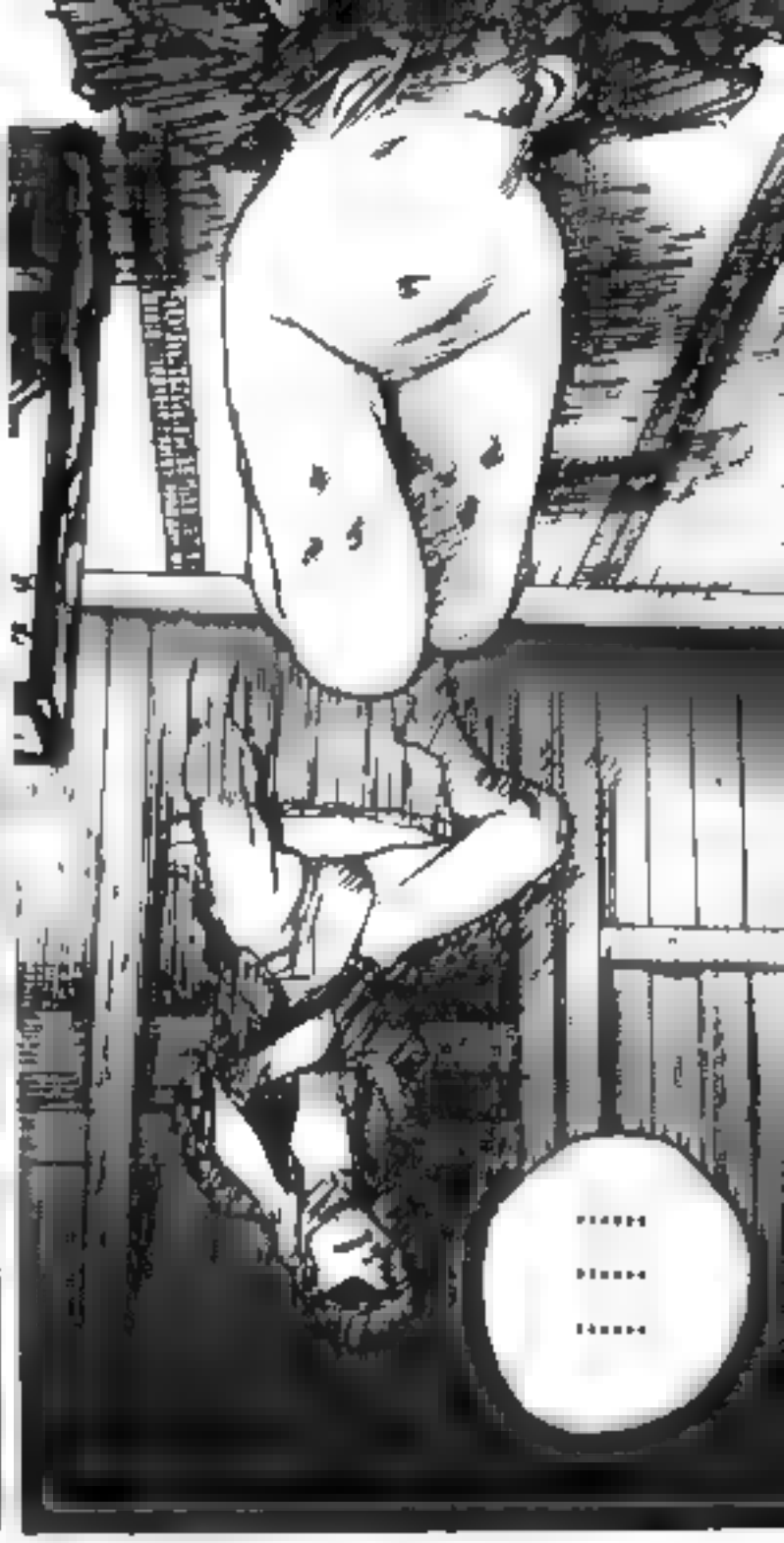


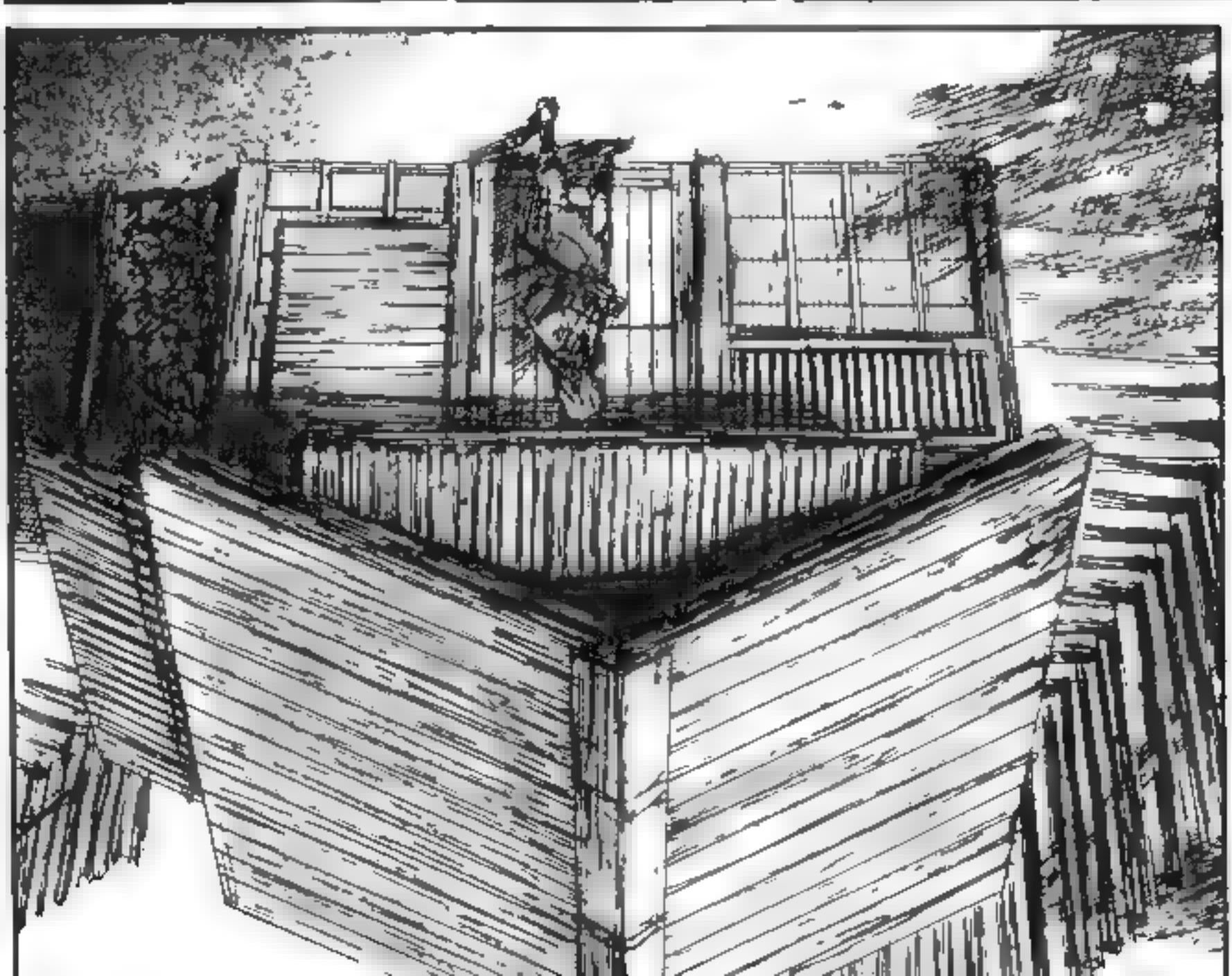

SPLASH

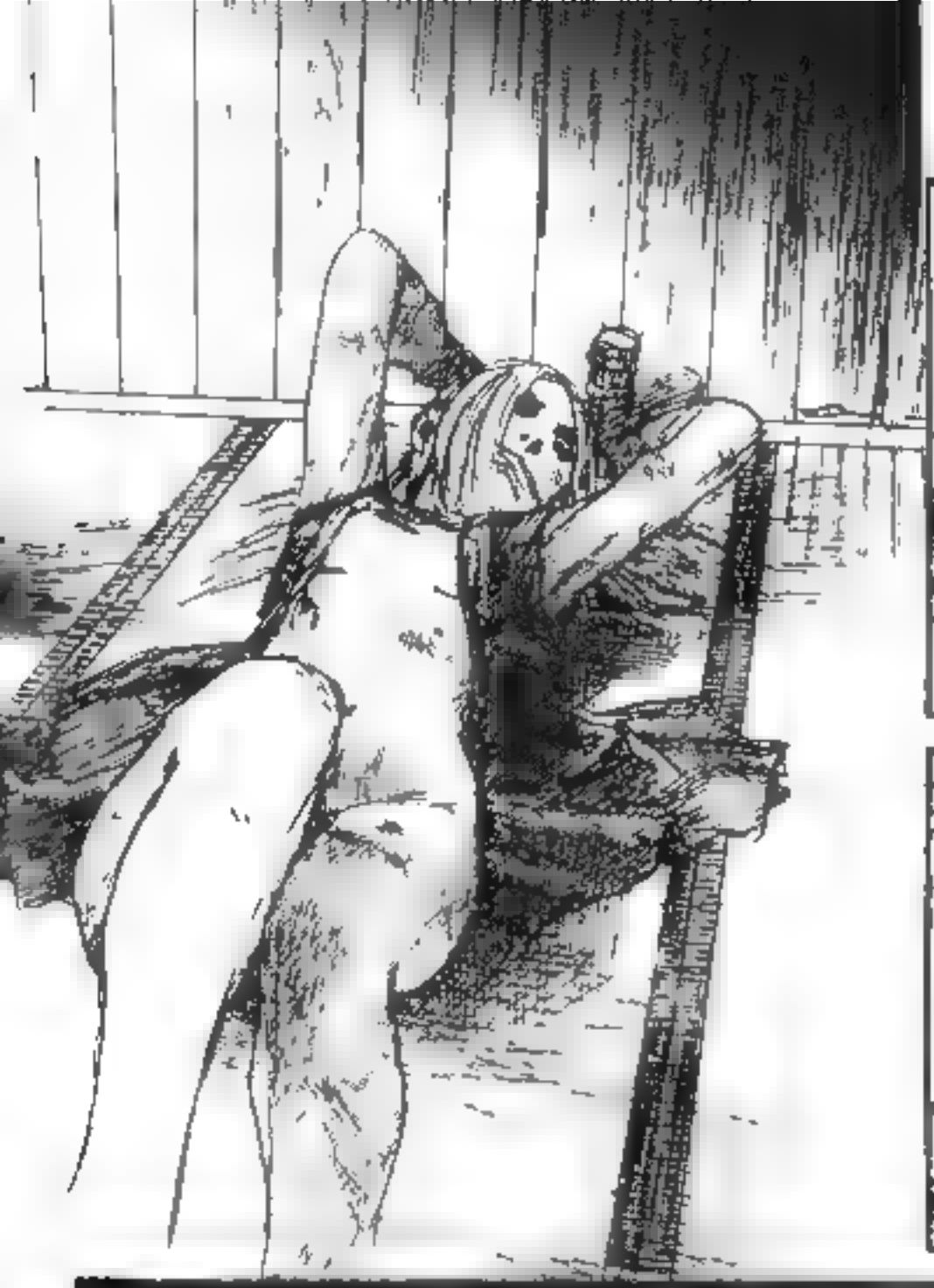
YOU TAKIN' A WHIZ, TOO?

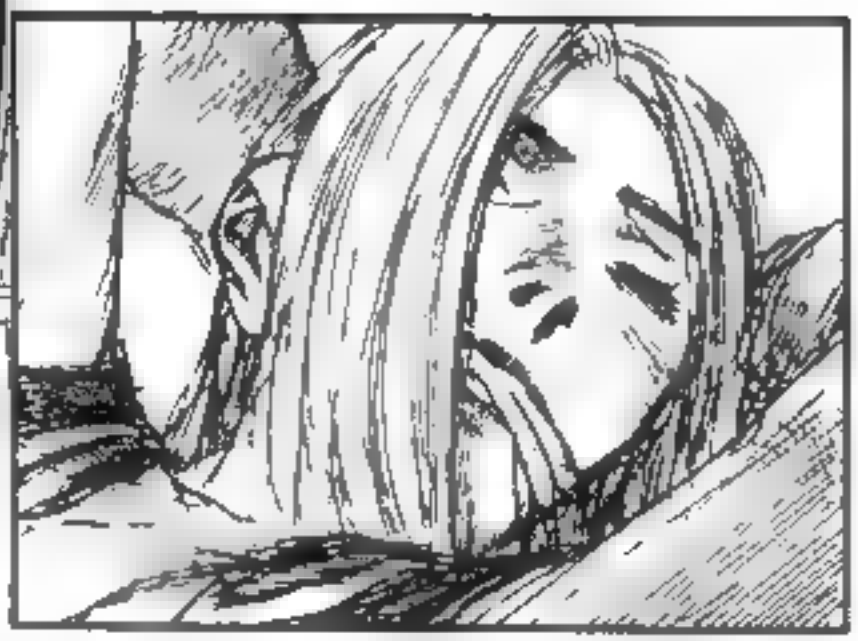
MM.
YOU'LL BE ALONE HERE... WATCH THE WOMAN.

YEAH, SURE.







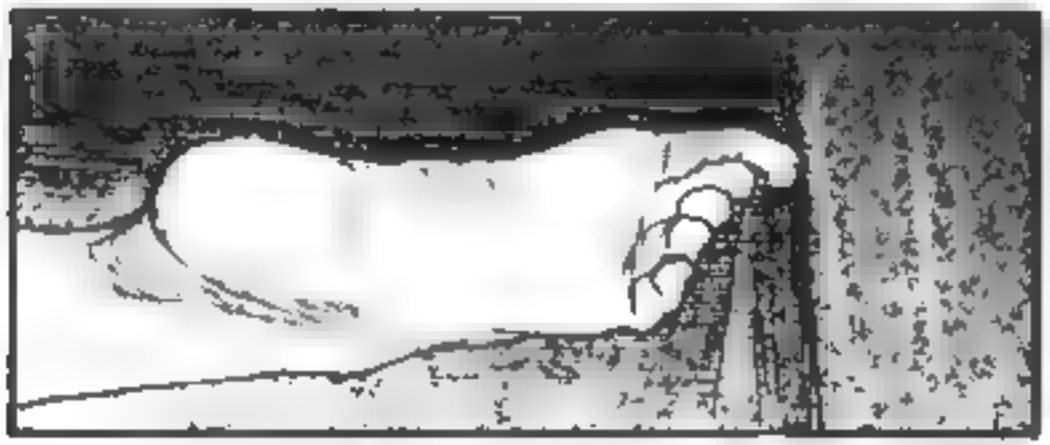


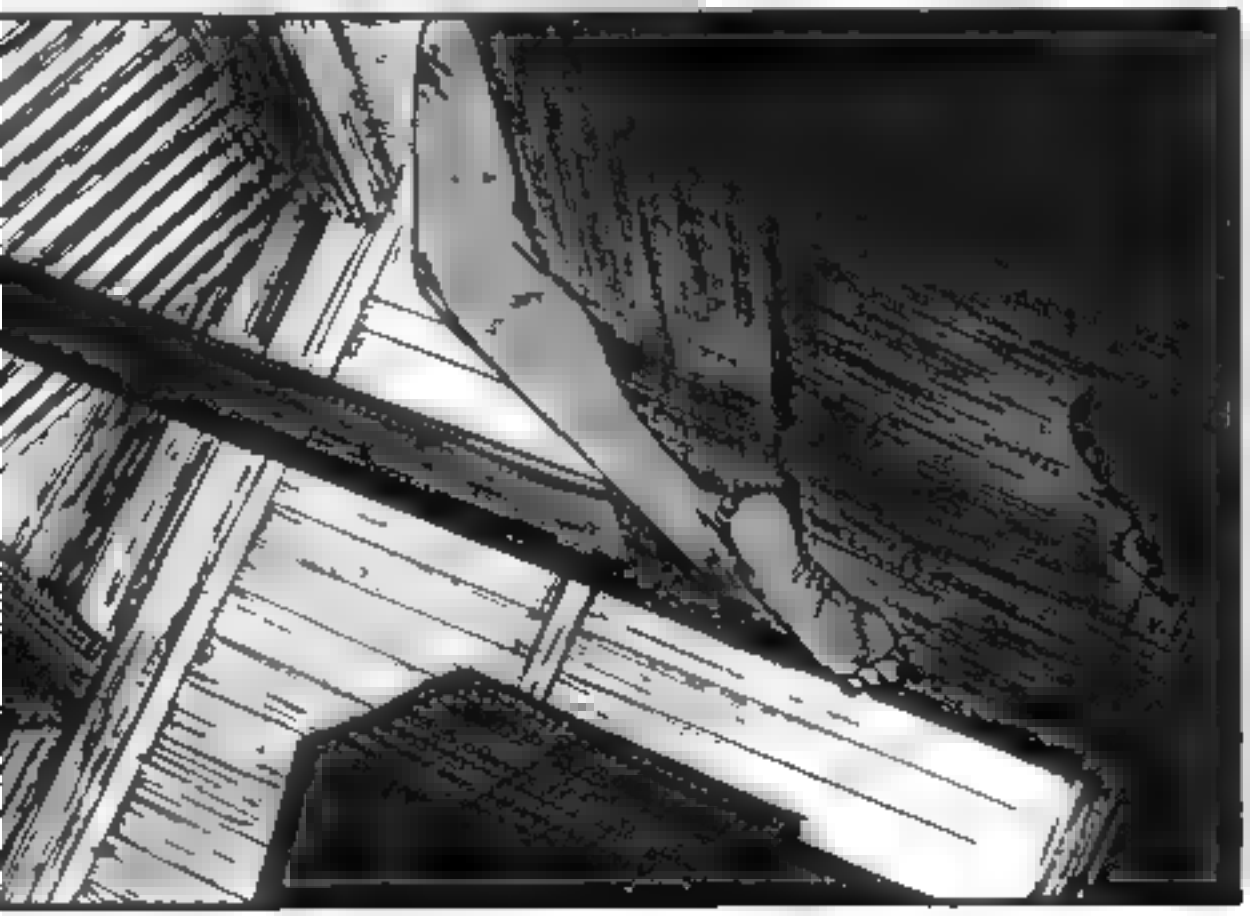
NNG...

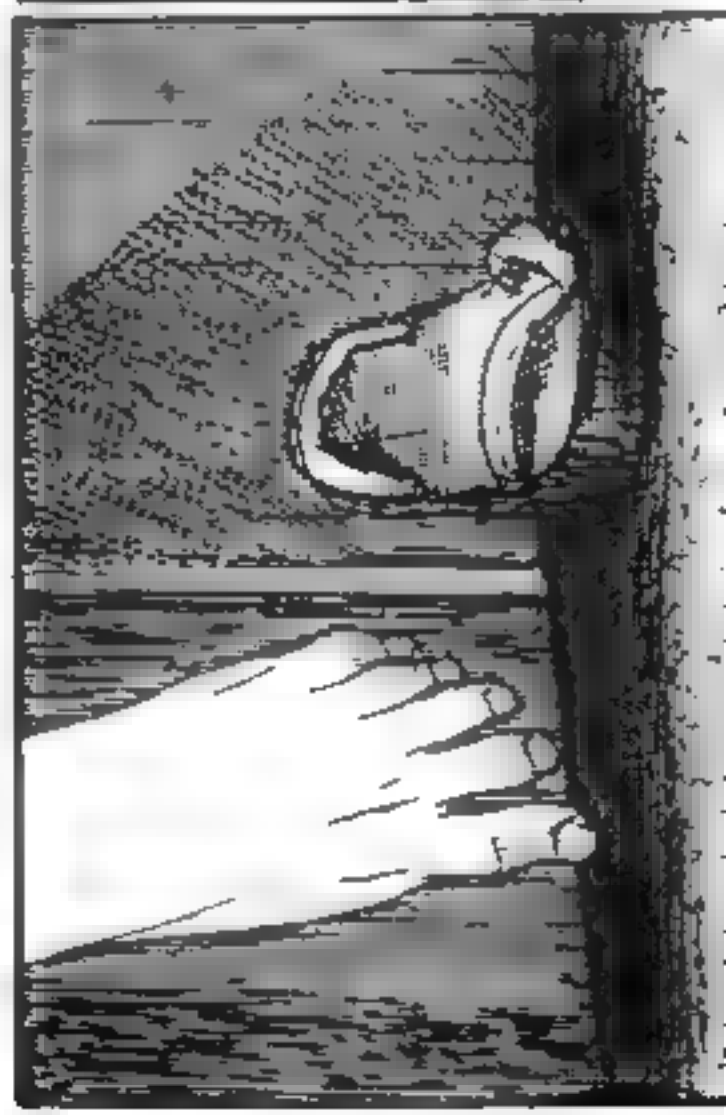
.....

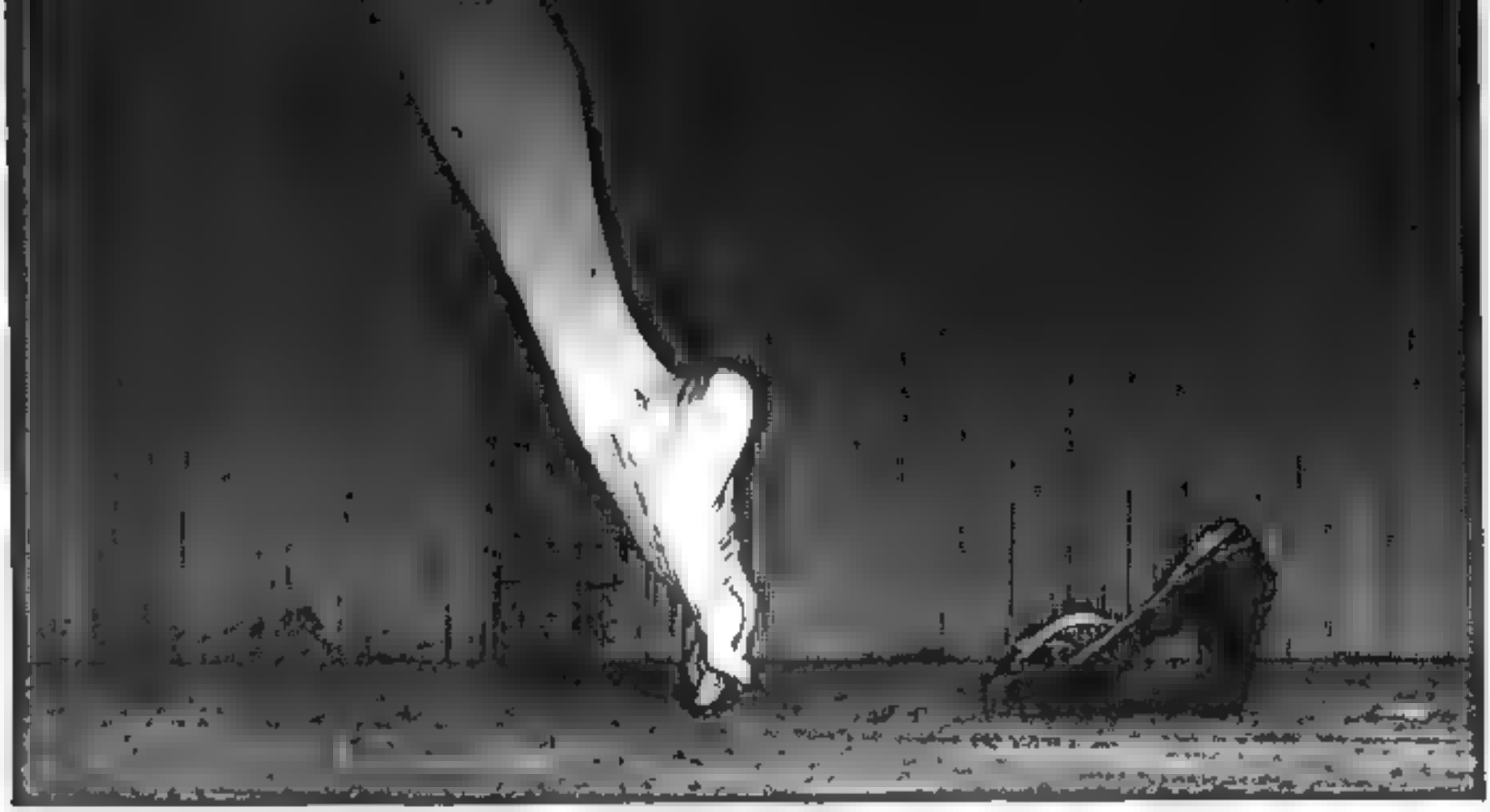
SHRK

HKK...!

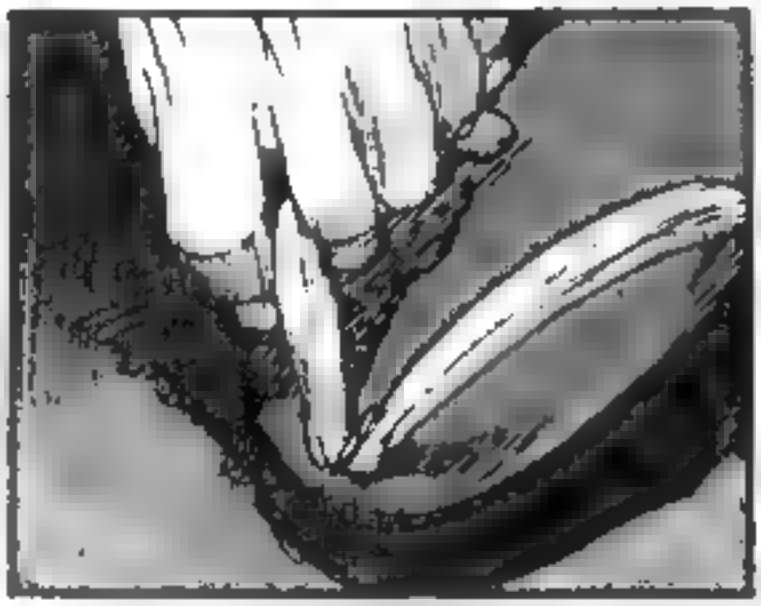








NNG!
Hmmf



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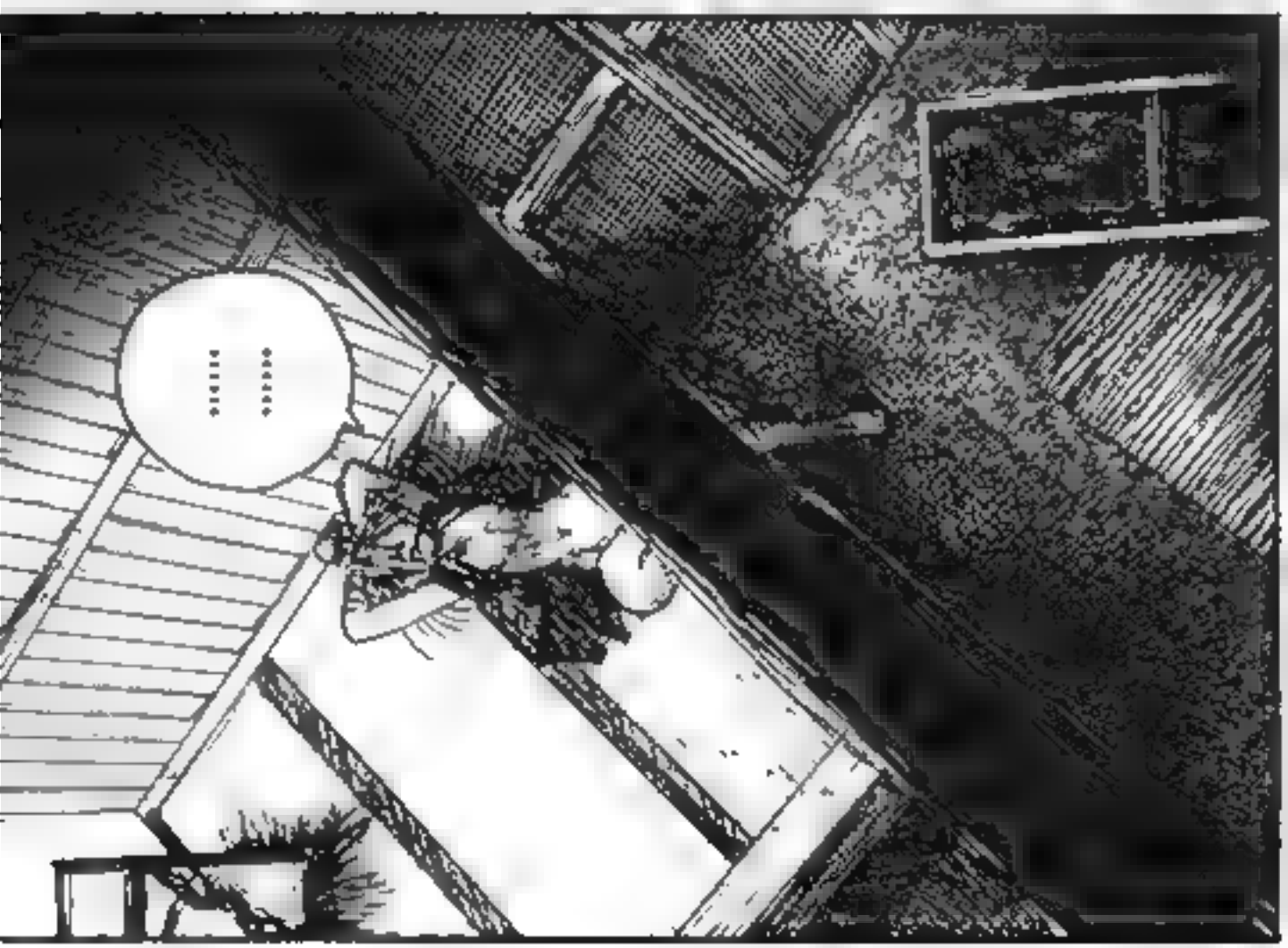
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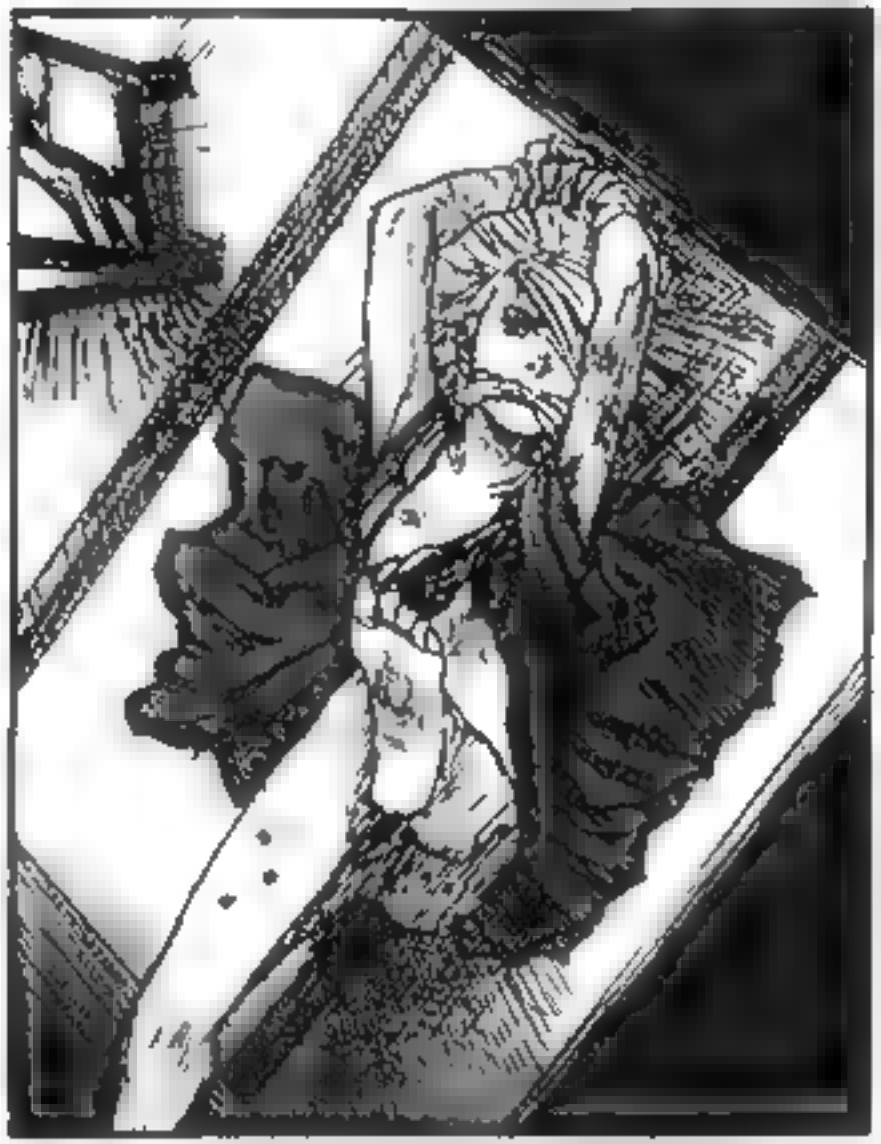
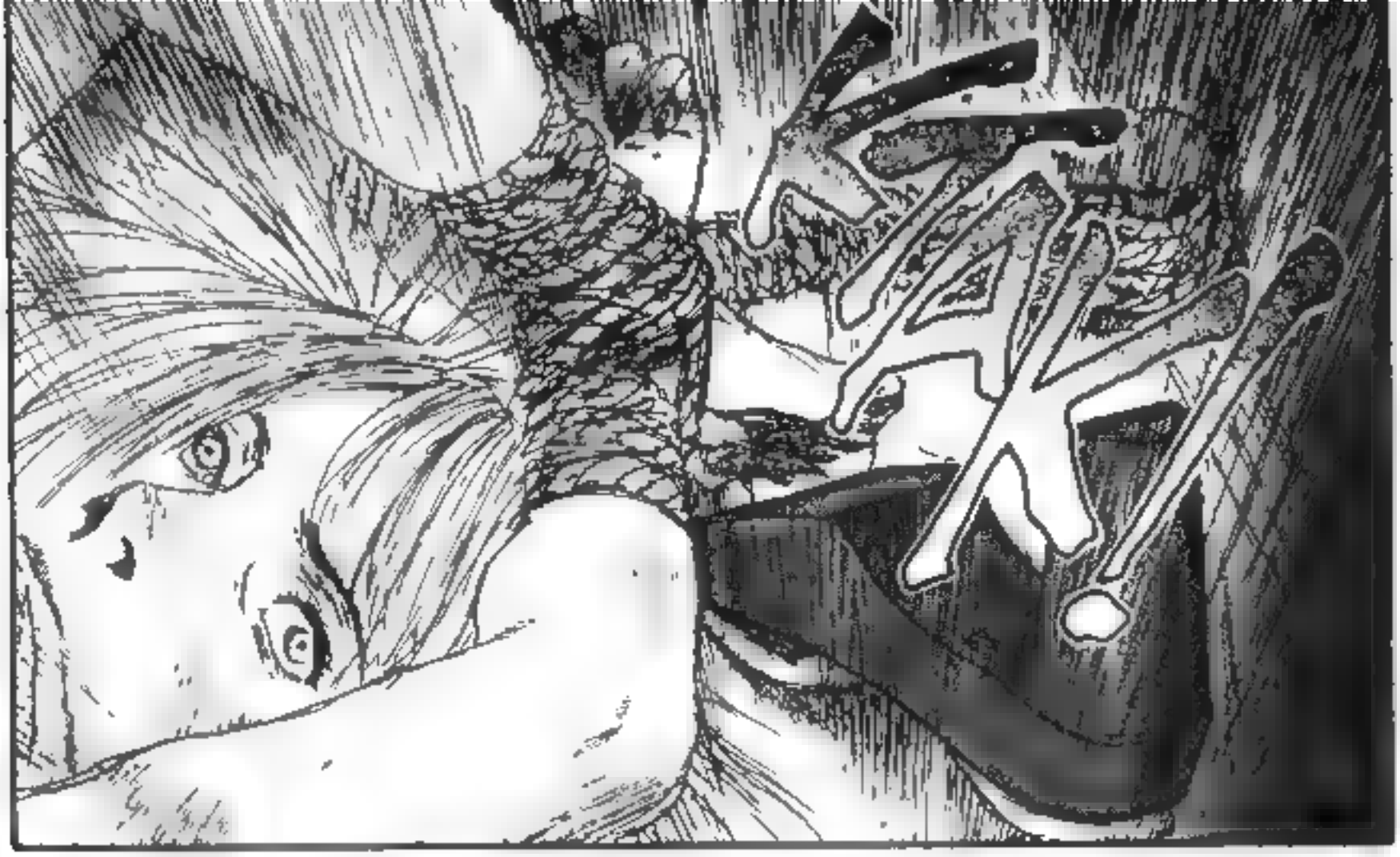


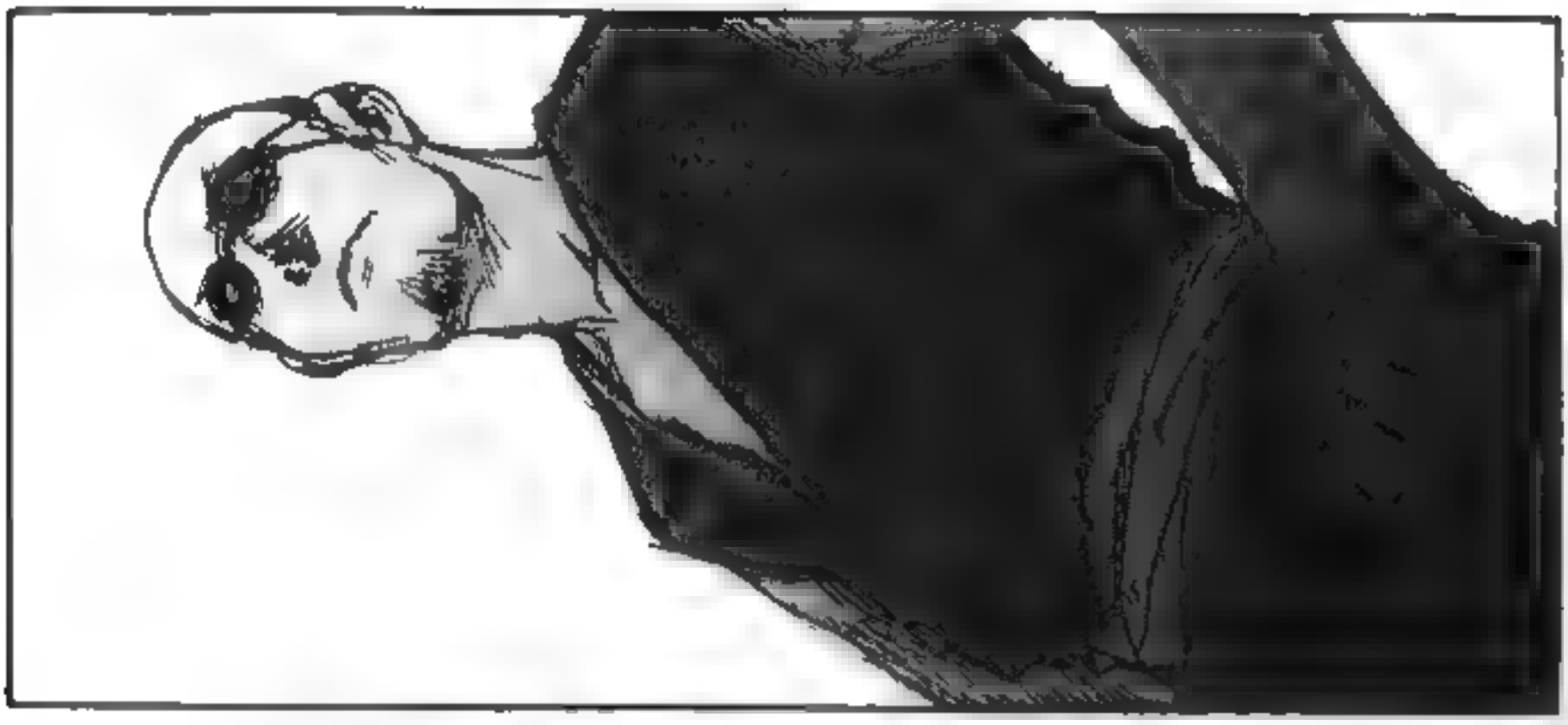

AAAA

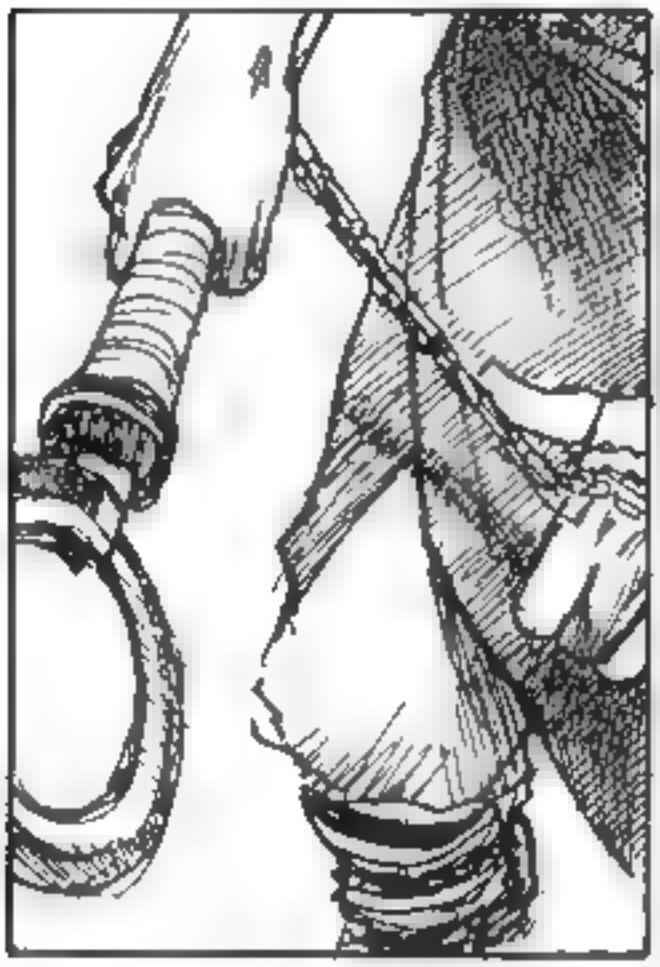
huff

HGG...
NNF!
.....

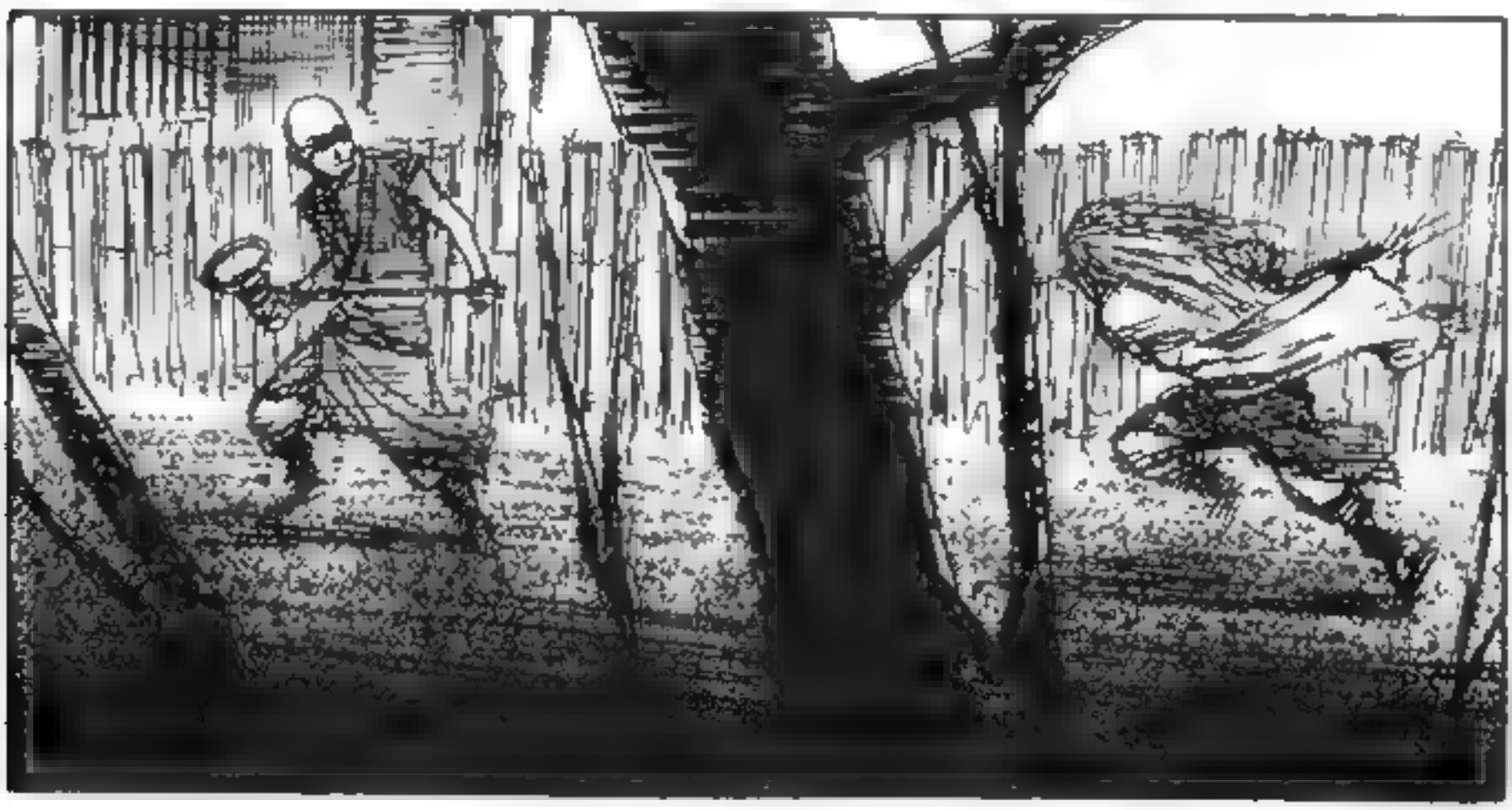
KRAK

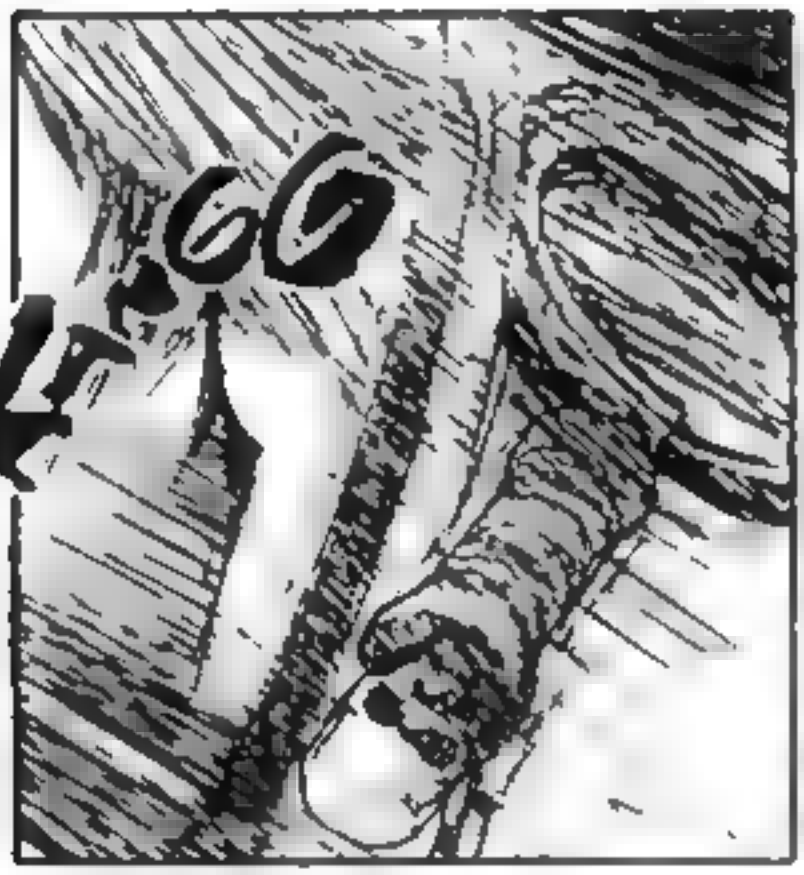
TOK TOK





.....
.....
THIS MAN...





FUNAK

VISIPALS

WHOOSH!

FAP
!!

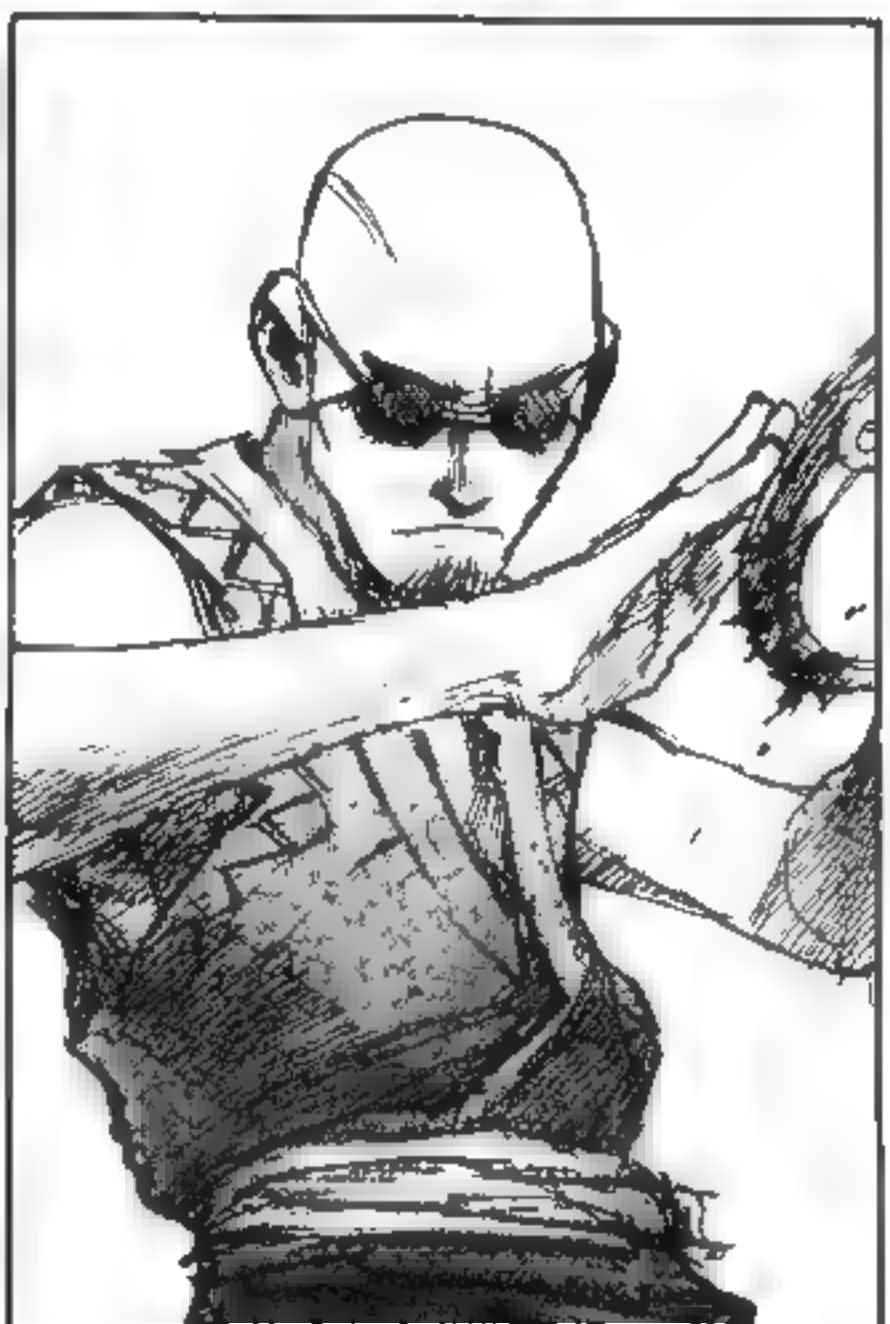
I'LL GIVE YOU MY ARM--
--IN TRADE FOR YOUR HEAD!

SNIKT

WHA--?!

IMPOSS--

ぬぬ

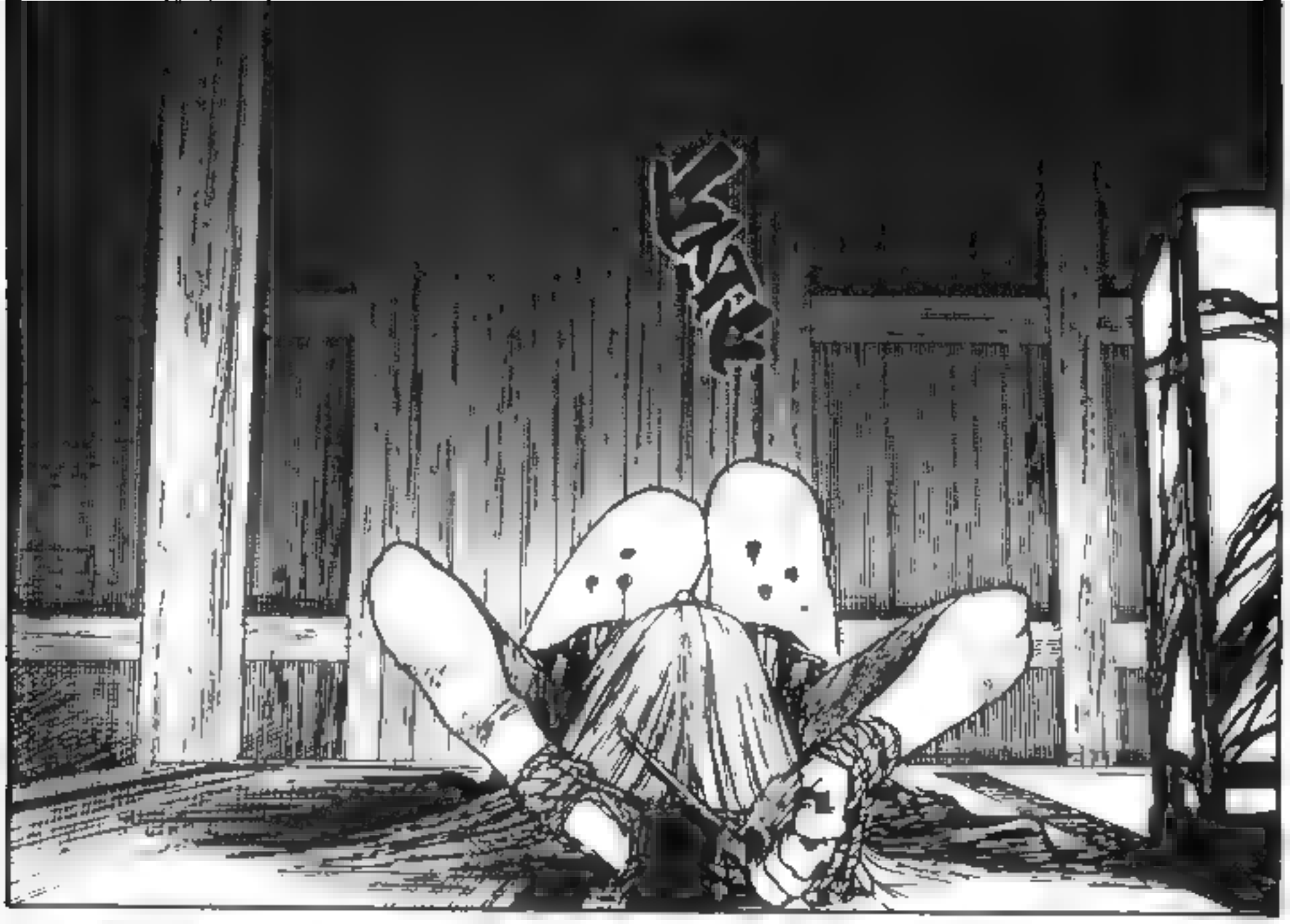


?!

WHAT THE FUCK?!
N... NO WAY...

.....
.....

YOU BETTER NOT GET YOUR ASS *KILLED*, KINUKA!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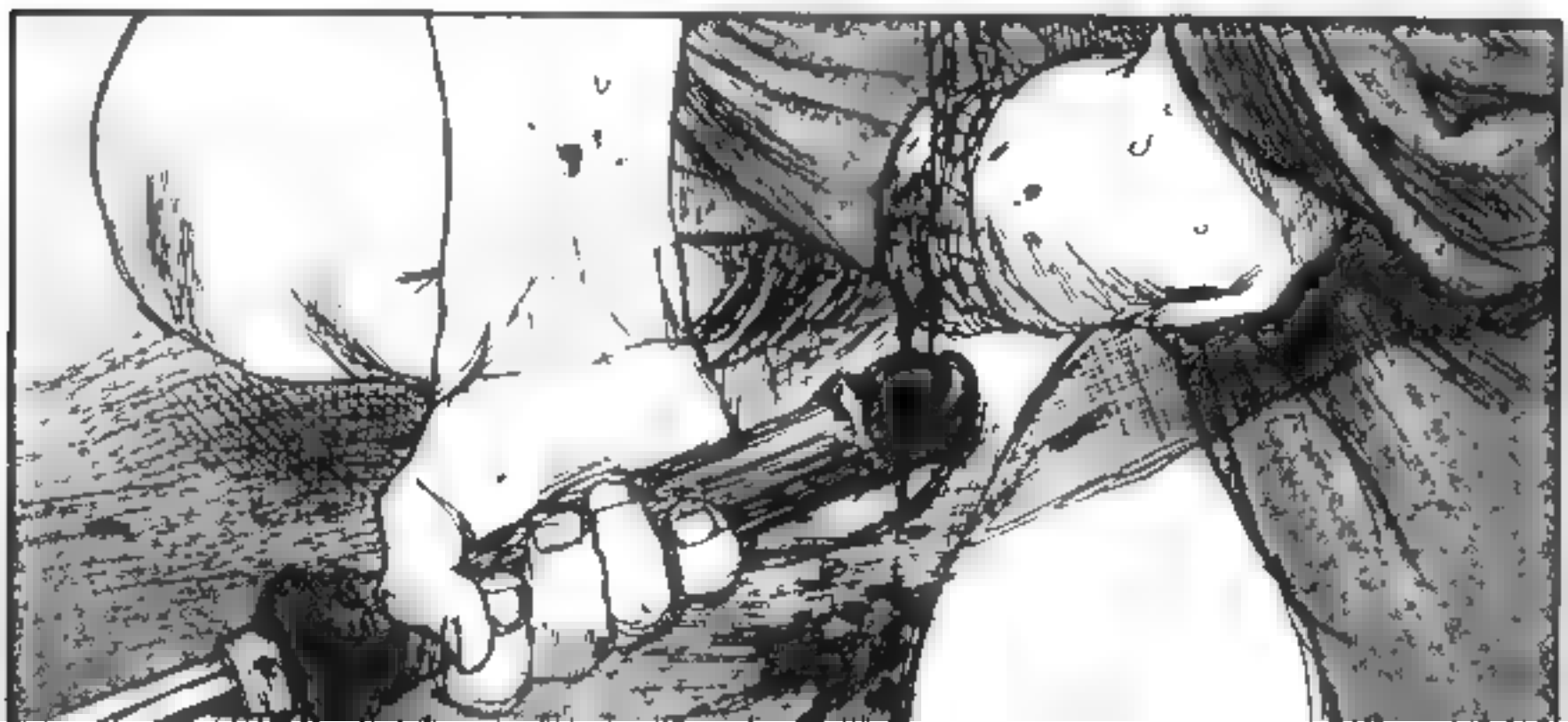
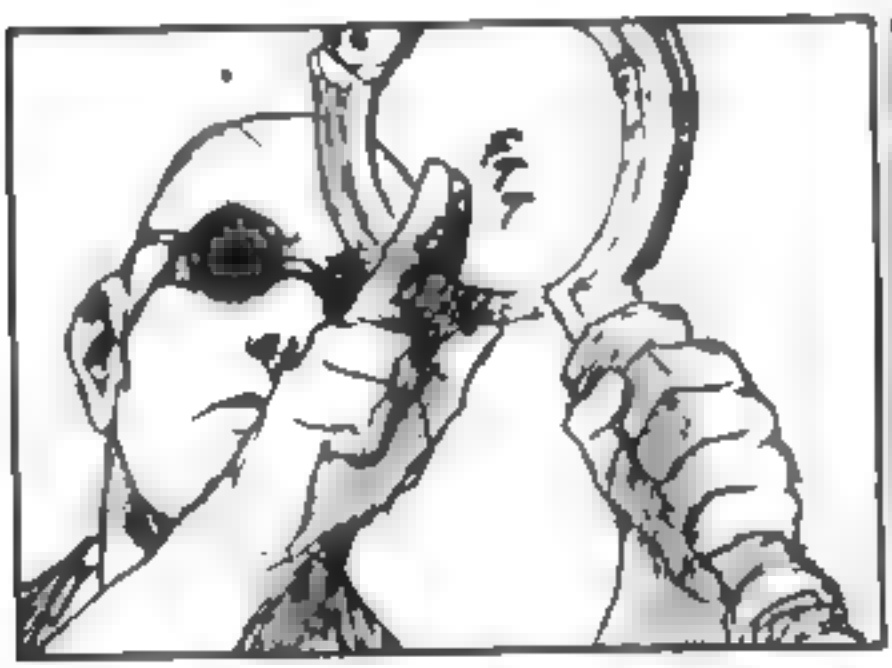


HNNG
HHHH



KINUKA!

STAY OUT OF THIS, TAMA-SAKI!

AN ARM, A LEG... IT'S OUR PRIDE AS ITTŌ-RYŪ--
--TO FIGHT ALONE!

IT...
IT MAY BE...

...THAT I WILL BE *DEFEATED* HERE. SO *BE* IT!

WHAT MATTERS IS...

...THE BLADE POINTS NEXT AT *YOU!*

AND IF *I* CAN'T DEFEAT HIM... YOU HAVE *NO* CHANCE!

DON'T EVEN *THINK* OF IT.

GO... TO THE MUKŌJIMA *DŌJŌ.*

AND BRING BACK ABAYAMA SŌSUKE-*DONO!*

THE OLD MAN'S OUR *ONLY CHANCE.*

UNDER-STAND?!
NOW *GO!*

I'LL HOLD THE LINE!

SH...
SHIT...
.....

OKAY.
KINUKA!

I'LL BE
BACK IN
HALF
AN
HOUR!

DON'T
DIE
ON ME,
MAN!

!

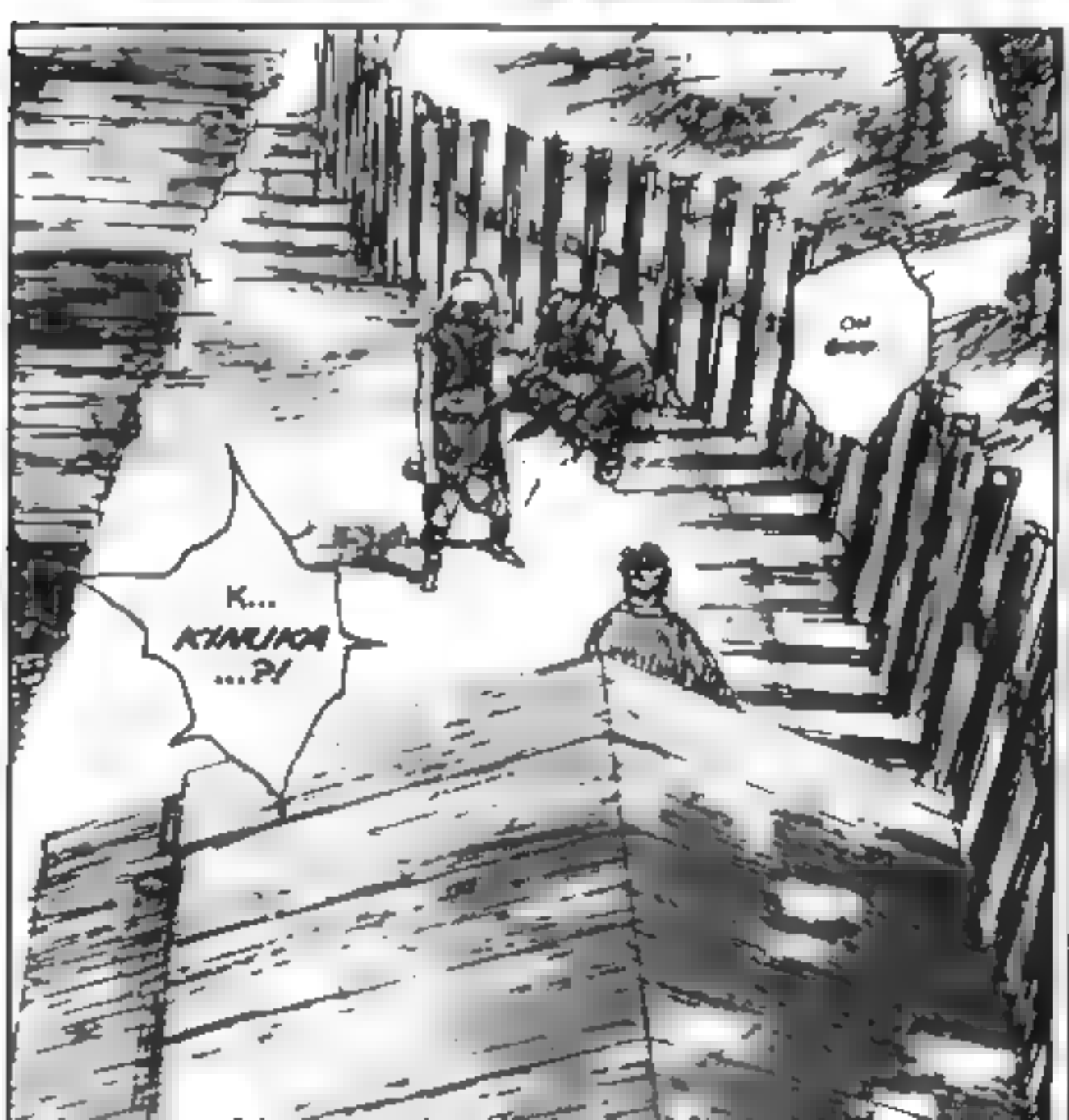
AH, SHIT!

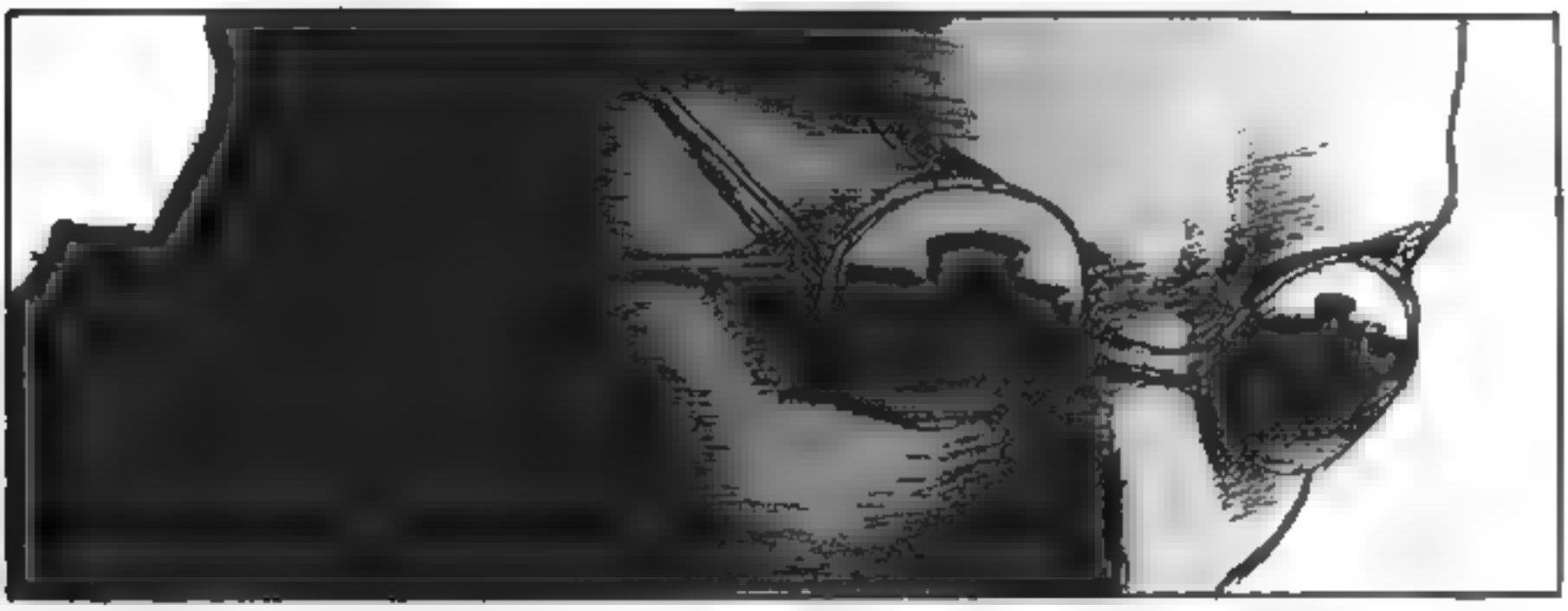
URYAAHH!

I AM YOUR OPPONENT... AND I AM *STILL ALIVE!!*

HALT!

OUR BATTLE IS NOT YET OVER!


K...
KIMURA
...?!



-hahh-
-hff-
-hahh-
-huhh-

THANKS A LOT...

...YOU ASS-HOLE!

HEH, HEH... JUST TWO DAYS...

EIGHT OF US IN TWO DAYS!

NO WAY...

TOO MUCH KILLING. YOU BASTARDS!

NO WAY THIS EVENS OUT!!

HEH... I'M NOT DUMB.

I KNOW I'M NOT WALKING AWAY FROM THIS.

BUT LUCK, MAN...

LUCK SMILED ON ME ONCE WAY--

--YOU STILL HAVEN'T RESCUED YOUR BITCH.

NO YOU DON'T! DON'T MOVE!

FIRST WE GOTTA *BET.*

FROM WHERE YOU'RE STANDING, CAN YOU TAKE MY HEAD OFF...

...*BEFORE* I PLANT MY SWORD IN SLEEPING BEAUTY'S *HEART?!*

.....

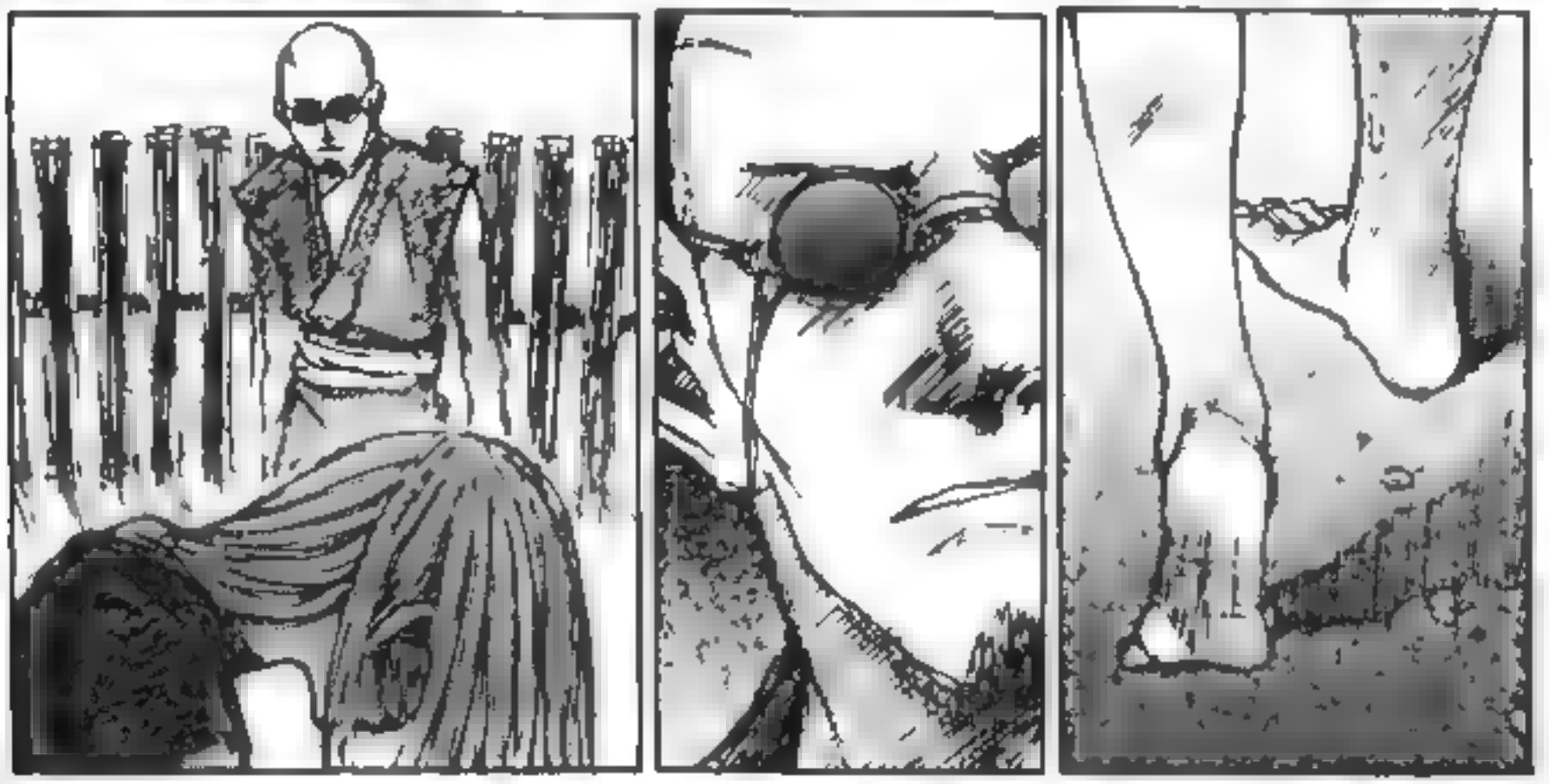
.....

HEH, HEH... DON'T THINK SO, DO YA, PAL? *DO YA?!*

SO WHY DON'T YA JUST RUN ON BACK TO YOUR BOSS AND--

SHAKE

WHA...
WHAT
THE...
.....
H-HOLY
SHIT...!



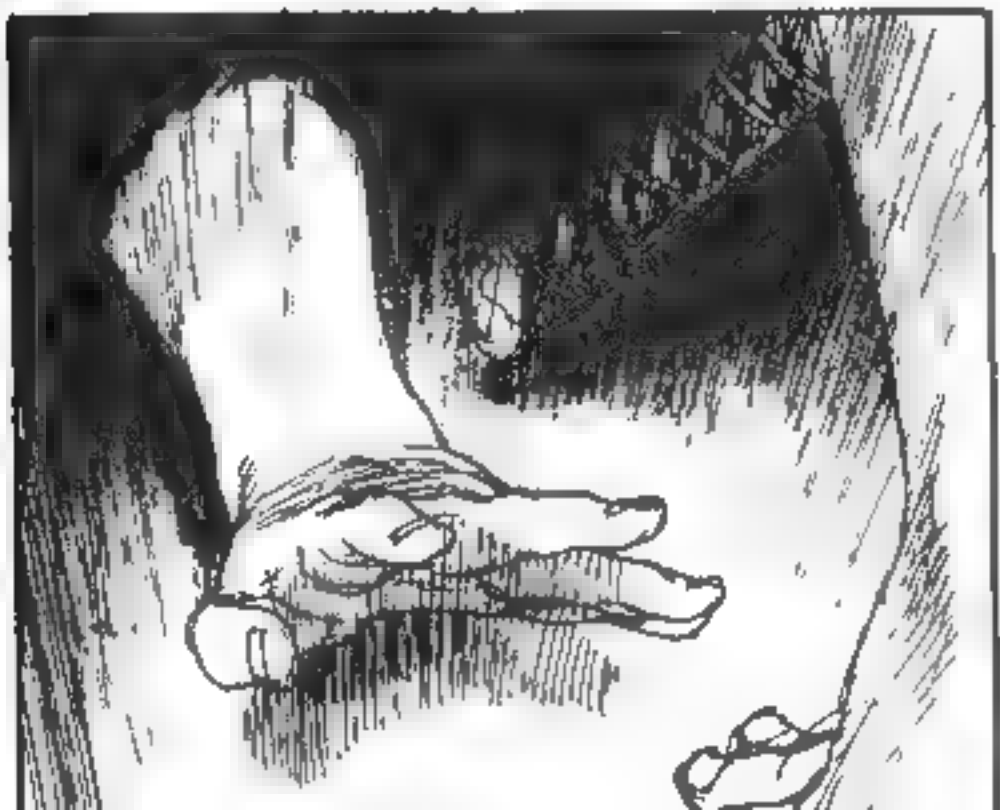
HOW...
HOW...
.....

FUCK IT!! YEAH!! BRING IT ON!!

ONE ARM EACH!!

NOW WE'RE EVEN, BITCH!

YOU'RE DEAD MEAT!!



AH .

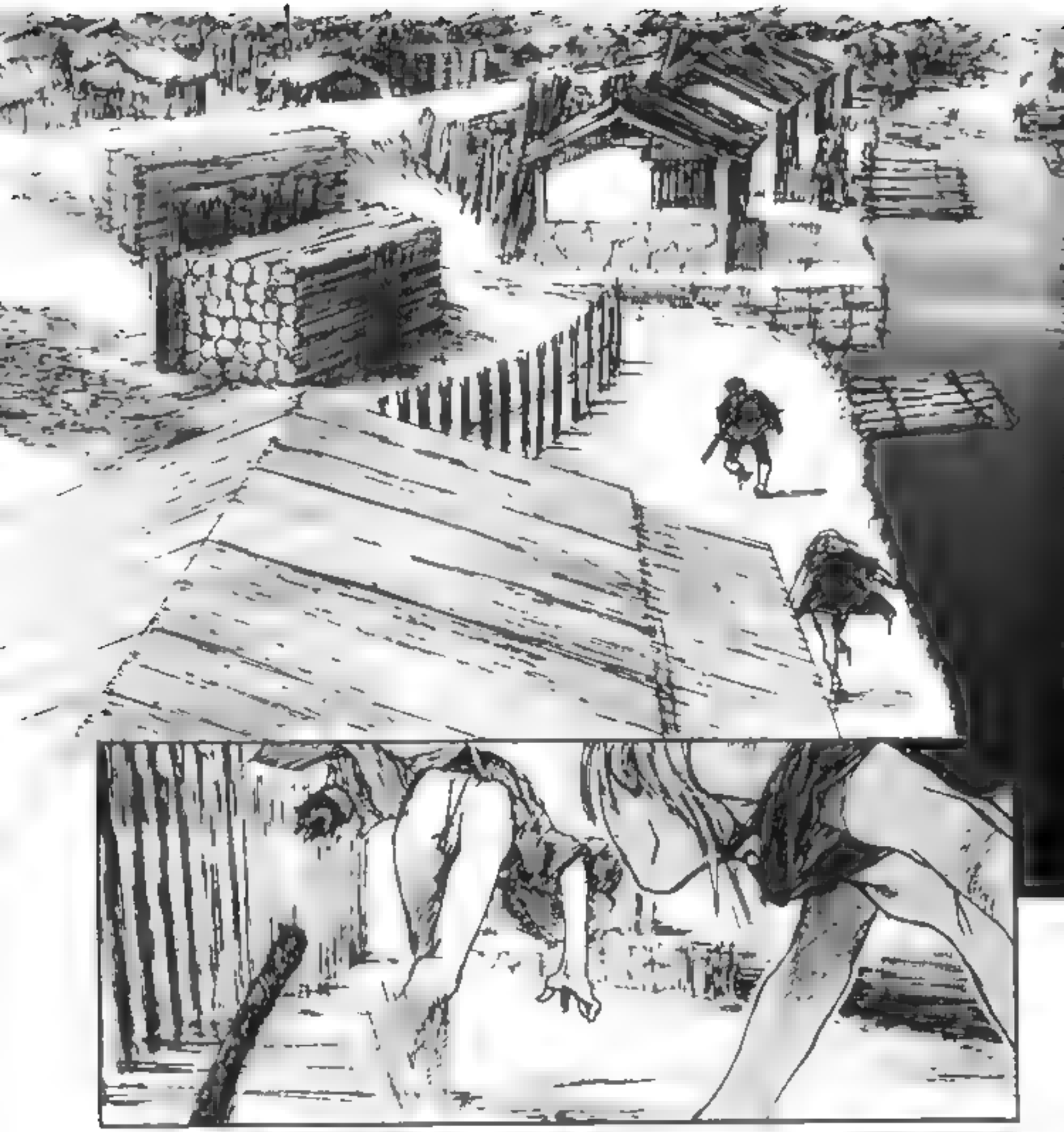
CHAK

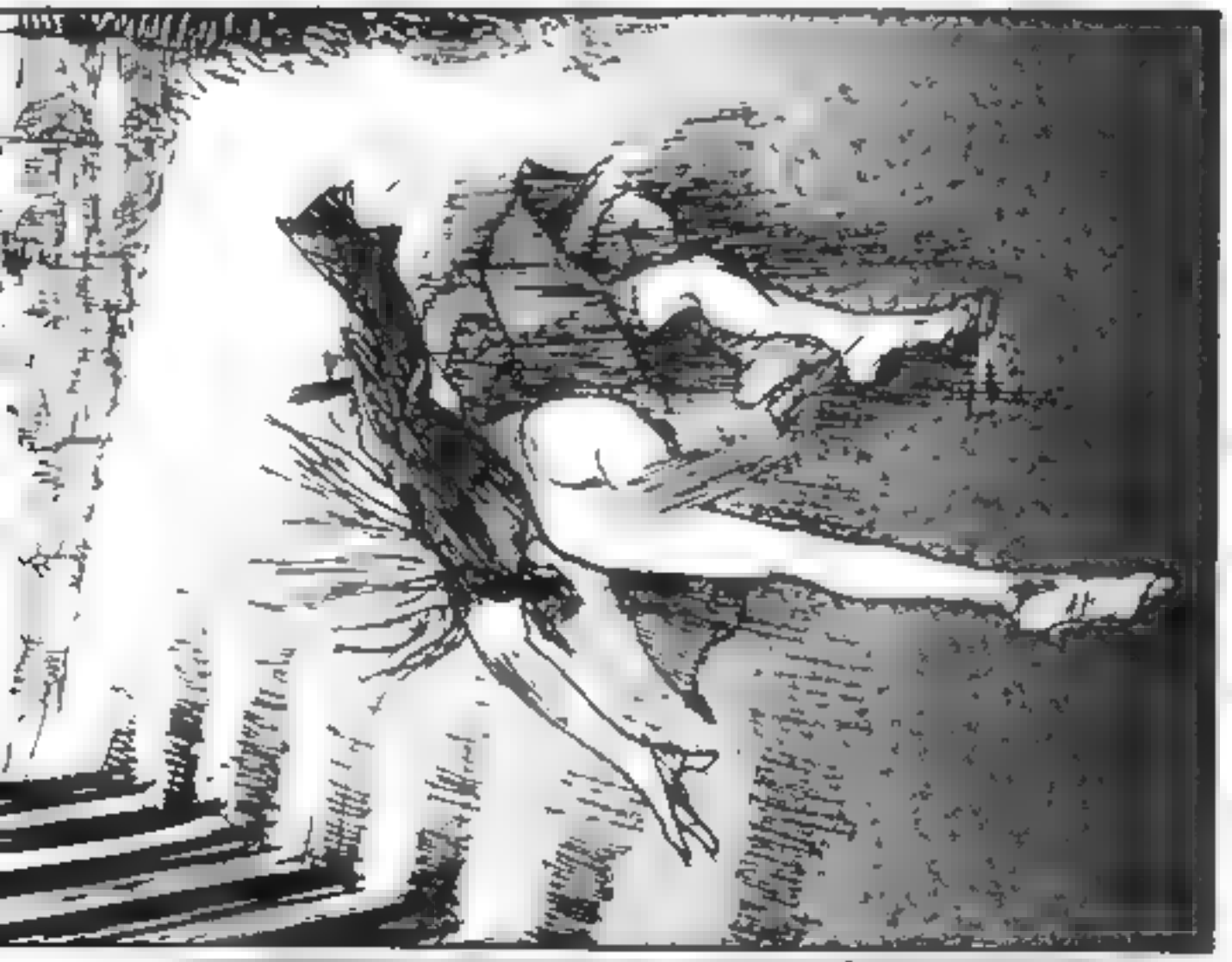
NO... *NOW* WE'RE EVEN.

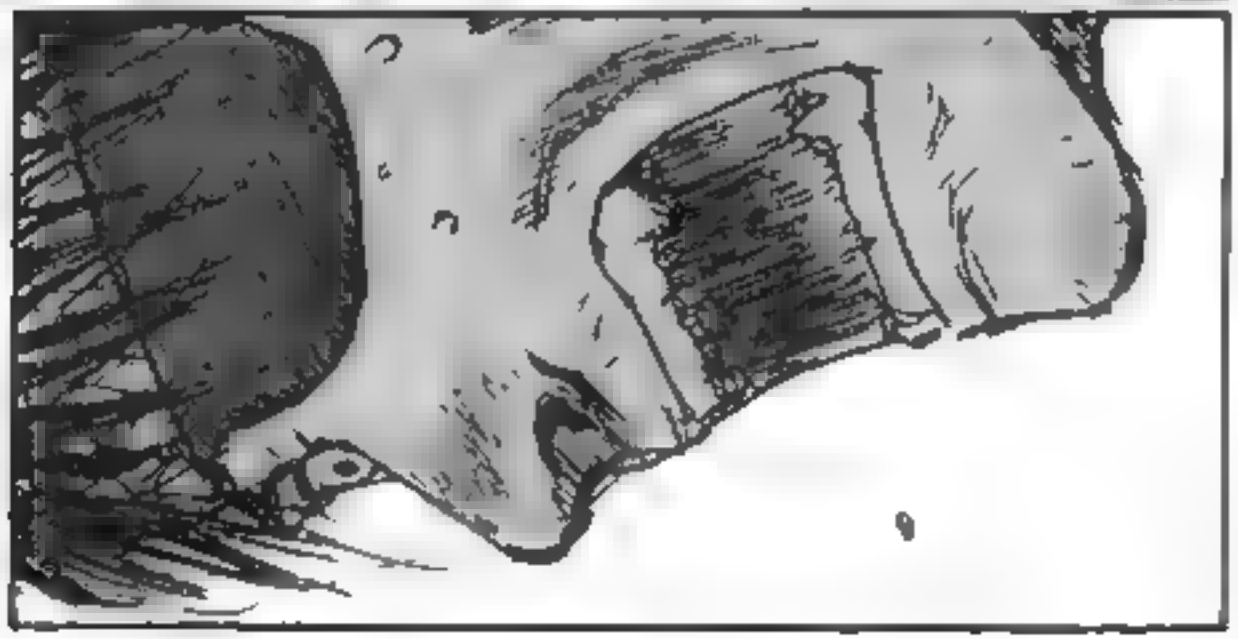
HEH, HEH

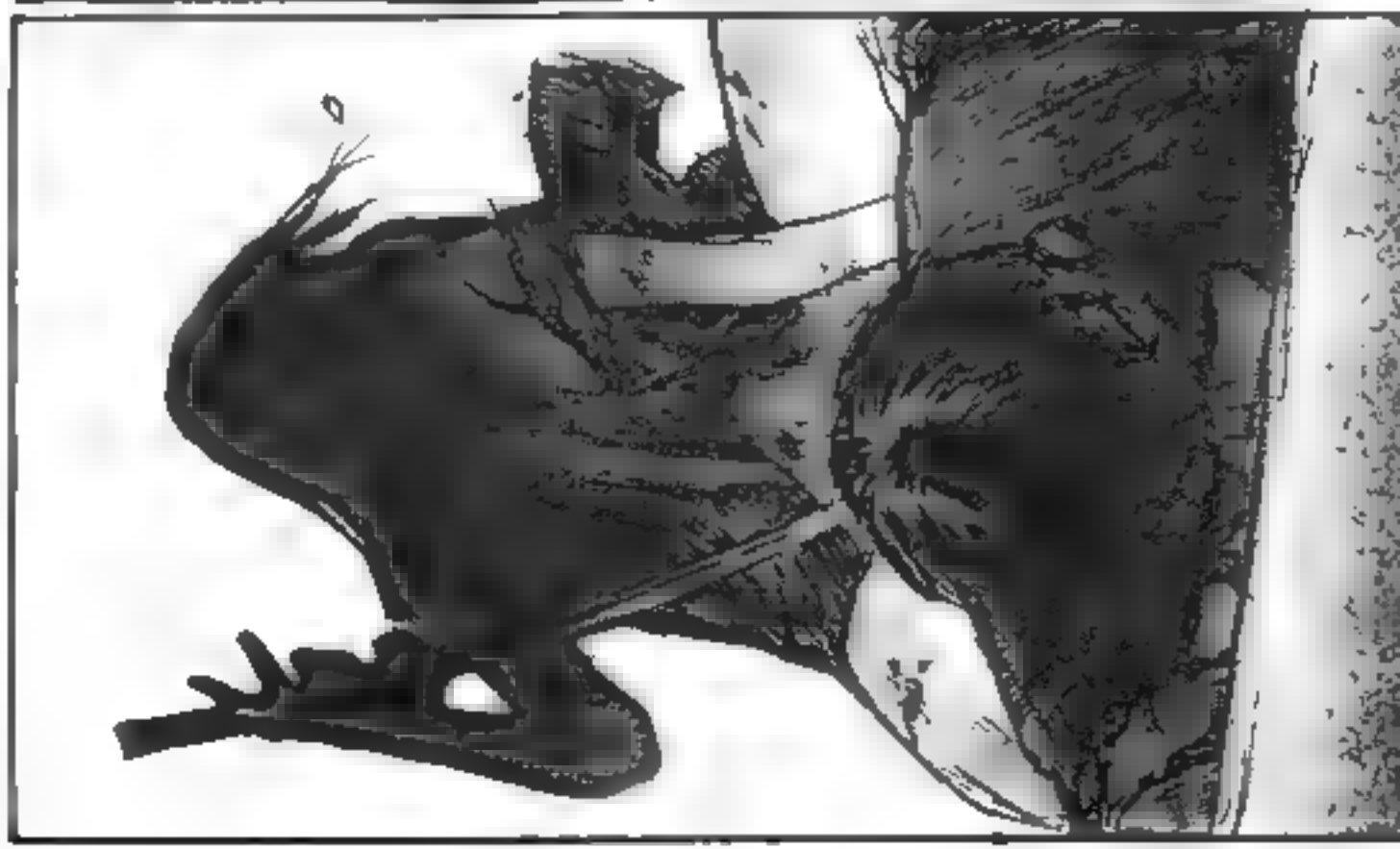
DON'T YOU FUCKING *DARE*, YOU PIECE OF SHIT!!

SNAP









BEASTS
Part 5

MATSU-
HIKO!

MATSU-
HIKO...?!
OH!

THERE
YOU
ARE!

D-DON'T
LOOK,
MOTHER!

SWEETHEART, WHAT ARE YOU--*OH!* YOU'RE LIKE *ICE!* I WISH THAT MAN WOULD SHOW SOME *RESTRAINT*...

NO... IT'S NOT FATHER'S FAULT-- I *WANT* HIM TO BE HARD ON ME.

I'M SUCH A *WEAKLING.* AND THIS FACE... THE BOYS SHOVE ME AROUND AND CALL ME A *GIRL.*

EVERY DAY I'M REMINDED THAT I'M HEIR TO THE HAYAKAWA *DŌJŌ*... BUT IF I TRY TO FIGHT, I JUST GET BEAT UP.

AND EVERY TIME *FATHER* HEARS ABOUT IT...

...HOW IT MUST *HURT* HIM.

NO, IF HE CAN MAKE ME STRONG...

...I'LL *GLADLY* DO WHATEVER HE ASKS, MOTHER.

IT'S NOT A WOMAN'S *BUSINESS*, O-HYAKU.

IT'S BEEN TEN *YEARS* SINCE MY FATHER DIED... A DISCIPLE OF IEHARU-*SAMA* HIMSELF! "ONE OF THE THREE GREAT SWORDMASTERS," THEY CALLED HIM! AND *NOW* LOOK AT US! THE *DOJO* CLOSED, PEOPLE CALLING ME A *FRAUD* BEHIND MY BACK...

WE CAN'T EVEN AFFORD A *SERVANT!* CAN'T YOU *SEE* THE STATE WE'RE IN?!

EIGHT YEARS AGO... YOU TOOK THE *CHILD* I'D BORNE, MATSUHIKO'S TWIN *SISTER*...

...AND *KILLED* HER! "I HAVE NO TIME TO RAISE *GIRLS*," YOU SAID! YOU DIDN'T EVEN *NAME* HER!

I'VE ENDURED AND *ENDURED*... ALL FOR *MATSU-HIKO.*

BUT *TODAY* I'M SPEAKING MY MIND!

YOU! HIS OWN *FATHER!*

DO YOU WANT TO *CRIPPLE* THE BOY *FOR-EVER?!*

IF HE'S GOING TO *WITHER* AWAY IN A CRUMBLING HOUSE WITHOUT SAVING OUR *DŌJŌ*...

...THEN, *YES*-- I MIGHT AS *WELL* CRIPPLE HIM!

WHAT THE *HELL* ARE YOU *DOING?!*

GET *UP!* YOU'RE NOT LEAVING THIS GARDEN UNTIL YOU'RE *FINISHED!*

.....

GOOD!

LISTEN, MATSUI THE THING YOU LACK MOST OF ALL IS *MUSCLE!*

IF YOU CAN'T DO A *HUNDRED STROKES*...

...YOU'LL *NEVER* CONTROL A SWORD!

ARE YOU *MAD*?!

WHAT CHILD *ANYWHERE* CAN SWING A *WEIGHTED* PRACTICE SWORD A *HUNDRED TIMES*?! *ESPECIALLY* HIM!

N-NO... I CAN *DO* IT... MOTHER.

.....

.....

MATSU-HIKO!

:HKK:

:koff:

:koff:

H-HE'S COUGHING UP *BLOOD!*

.....

.....

IT...

IT'S *HOPELESS*, ISN'T IT.

HOPE-LESS.

SO, MATSU-HIKO...

IT SEEMS...

...*YOU* CAN'T ESCAPE THE ILLNESS, EITHER.

MY DEPARTED FIRST WIFE GAVE ME *TWO* SONS.

WHEN I REALIZED THEY *BOTH* HAD THE SAME SICK *LUNGS*...

...I FELT I *HAD* TO END THEIR LIVES. BY MY OWN *HAND!* THAT *FEELING*...

MY FEELING! CAN'T YOU *UNDER-STAND*?!

MATSU-HIKO...

...*ACCEPT* THIS.

??
AH!

HUSBAND!
NO!
DON'T--

KOFF
KOFF
FBD

O-HYAKU...

:kof:

I'LL JUST... HAVE YOU BEAR ANOTHER...

KAKŌSAI...?

IT'S *ME!* I BROUGHT YOUR *PAINT-ING*...

OH, WELL...

.....
.....
OH... THE BLOOD...?
IT WOULDN'T COME OUT...
MY LITTLE BOY'S... BLOOD...

HYAKU! WIFE OF HAYAKAWA [redacted] GENKEI!

AGE, TWENTY-SIX!

IF YOU HAVE ANY LAST WORDS, *SPEAK NOW!*

ME...

.....

.....

ME...

AND MY BOY... TOO...

...HE PLANNED IT... YES... RIGHT FROM THE START.

LITTLE BOY... DEAD BOY... JUST EIGHT YEARS ON EARTH...

HIS OWN... CHILD...

.....

.....

WHY... WHY AM I HERE...?

DID I DO SOME-THING... WRONG?

.....

ALL RIGHT.

TH... THAT'S ENOUGH. DO IT.

Y-YES, SIR.

HOLD!

AH?!

OH! IT'S *YOU*, SIR!

I'M TAKING THE WOMAN.
I'VE CLEARED IT WITH THE MASTER OF THE GUARDS.

YES, SIR.

EVERY-THING SEEMS IN ORDER, SIR...

BUT... BUT WHAT ON EARTH CAN ONE *WOMAN* DO FOR YOU...?

THERE ARE JOBS *ONLY* A WOMAN CAN DO, GENTLEMEN.

AND BESIDES...

...DAMNED *GUTSY*, DON'T YOU THINK? *UNTRAINED*, AND YET SHE TOOK ON HER HUSBAND, A *MASTER* OF THE SWORD.

I'VE BEEN FRIENDS WITH YOUR HOUSEHOLD... THE HAYAKAWAS...

...FOR *TWO GENERA-TIONS.*

GENKEI WAS AN OLD-FASHIONED MAN.

OBSESSED BY HIS FATHER'S SHADOW, HE STILL THOUGHT HE COULD WIN FAME BY THE *SWORD!* IN *THIS* WORLD? A WORLD OF HUNDRED AND FIFTY *YEARS* OF PEACE SINCE THE SHIMABARA UPRISING? THE *FOOL.*

IF HE HADN'T *DISCIPLINED* HIS FRAIL CHILD LIKE THAT, IF HE'D JUST *APPRENTICED* HIM, ENROLLED HIM IN *SCHOOL...*

THIS FOOLISH TRAGEDY NEED NEVER HAVE HAPPENED.

DON'T HATE *ALL* SAMURAI. *THEY'RE* NOT YOUR ENEMY.

BUT THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THIS NEW WORLD.

THEY RUN *BLINDLY* AFTER THE *SWORD.* INEXPLICABLE.

IN FACT... THERE'S ONE *HERE.* IN EDO.

WOMAN!
BY THE MERCY OF THE *GO-ROJŪ*, YOU'RE ONE OF *US* NOW.

LISTEN WELL!

[illegible] HERE TODAY! BUT NO [illegible]— I CALL YOU *ANJŌJI*... THE [illegible]

THOSE YOU SHALL BATTLE ARE CALLED THE *ITTŌ-RYŪ*. MEN LIKE YOUR *HUSBAND*, LIVING BY THE *SWORD!* TRYING TO *RE-CREATE* THE WARRIORS OF *OLD!*

AND IN TIME, A THREAT TO THE *SHŌGUNATE*.

TAKE UP *ARMS* WITH US, *HYAKU!*

YOU'RE BACK WITH US.

.....

AH... GIICHI.

YOU WEPT IN YOUR SLEEP.

DREAMING ABOUT YOUR SON...?

.....

.....

Y... YES.

ABOUT MY SON.

AND... *YOU* WERE THERE, TOO.

WHAT...?

MM...? OH, NOTHING.

WHERE... ARE WE?

I RENTED A ROOM ACROSS FROM CHŌKICHI'S SHOP.

"AFTER YOU SPLIT THAT LAST MAN APART... YOU COLLAPSED.

"YOU'VE BEEN SLEEPING THREE DAYS."

THREE DAYS...

BANDAGES... MY ARM... DID YOU DO THIS FOR ME, GIICHI?

YES.

I WASHED YOU AS WELL.

HUH! BET I STUNK.

BLOOD AND SWEAT... AND... AND...

.....

.....

GIICHI...?

WHERE'S SHINRIJI?

.....

.....

DEAD.

I BURIED HIM BEHIND THE INARI SHRINE.

AHH...

SO... HE DIED.

SOMEHOW, I...

...I HAD A FEELING.

.....
.....

GIICHI--

IT WAS A DISASTER.

NO... I WOULDN'T CALL IT A *DISASTER.*

WE JUST GOT A LITTLE...

...*CARE-LESS.*

HA HA HA! THAT BASTARD SAID IT *HIMSELF!*

WE KILLED *NINE* IN TWO DAYS! *NINE!!*

AND ALL *WE* LOST WAS...

...WAS *SHINRIJI.* ONE LIFE AND... A BROKEN ARM.

NOT A BAD *TRADE...* WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

MUGAI-RYŪ HAD EIGHT, AND NOW WE'RE FOUR...

...INCLUDING THE BOSS.

I TOLD HIM ABOUT EVERYTHING, INCLUDING SHIRA.

OKAY. SO... WE CAN'T USE THE BATHHOUSE ANY MORE... WHERE DO WE GO NOW?

WE'LL GET INSTRUCTIONS.

RIGHT.

YOU JUST REST AND GET YOUR STRENGTH BACK.

GIICHI... THANK YOU.

.....

IT WAS NOTHING.

CHŌKICHI'S STILL IN THE SHOP.

.....
.....

UM...
.....
.....

I'M A LITTLE HUNGRY.

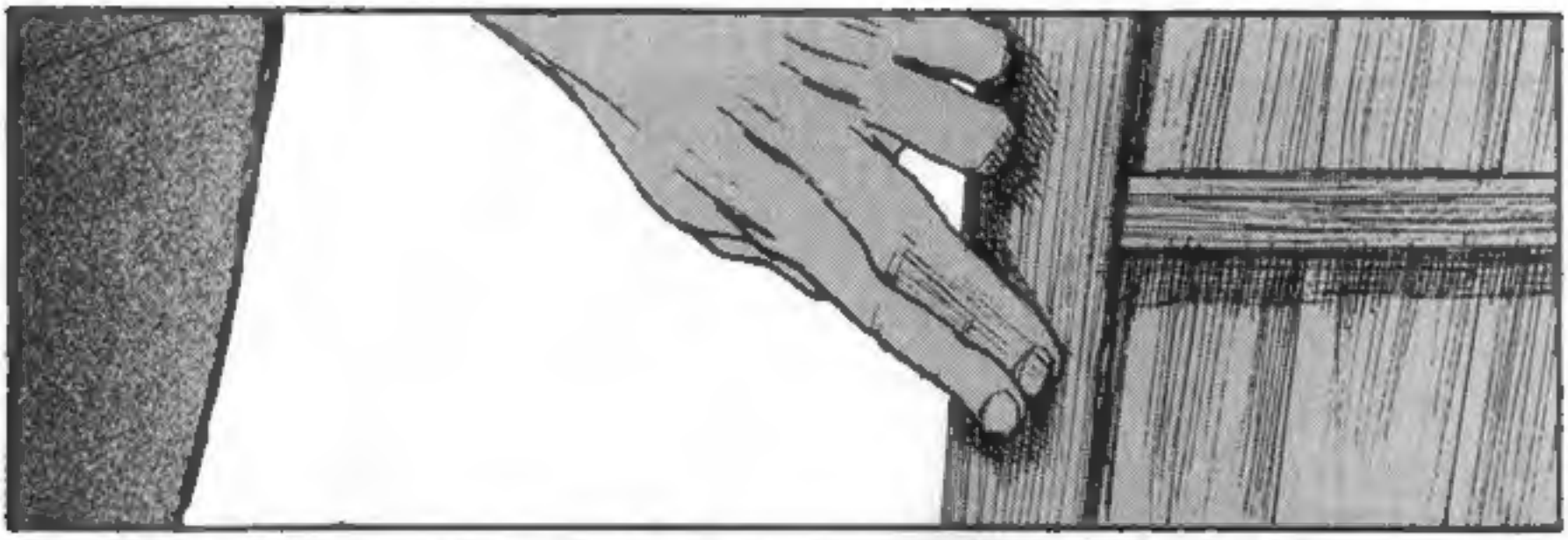
SHALL I HAVE HIM MAKE YOU SOME-THING...?

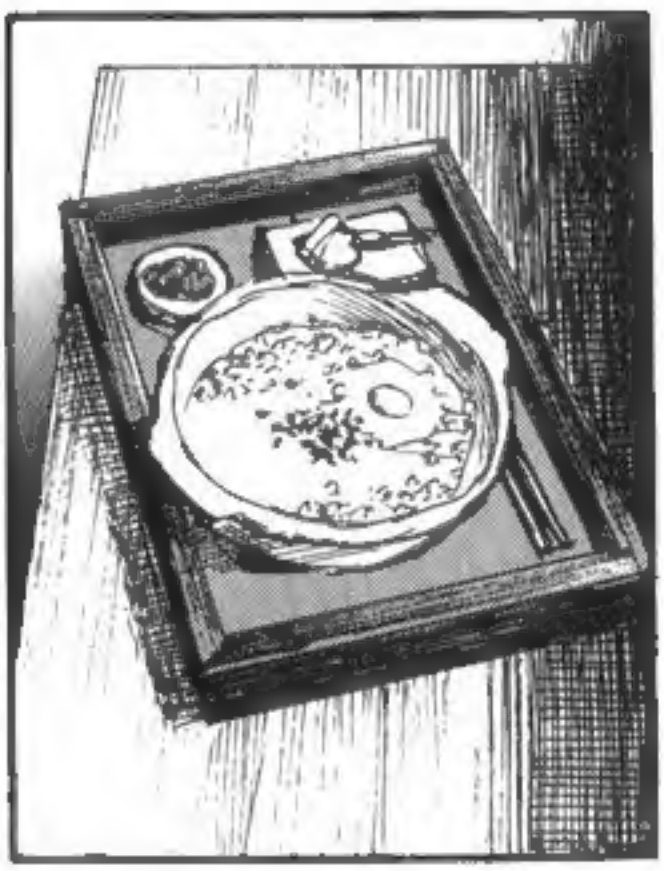
MAYBE SOME RICE GRUEL?

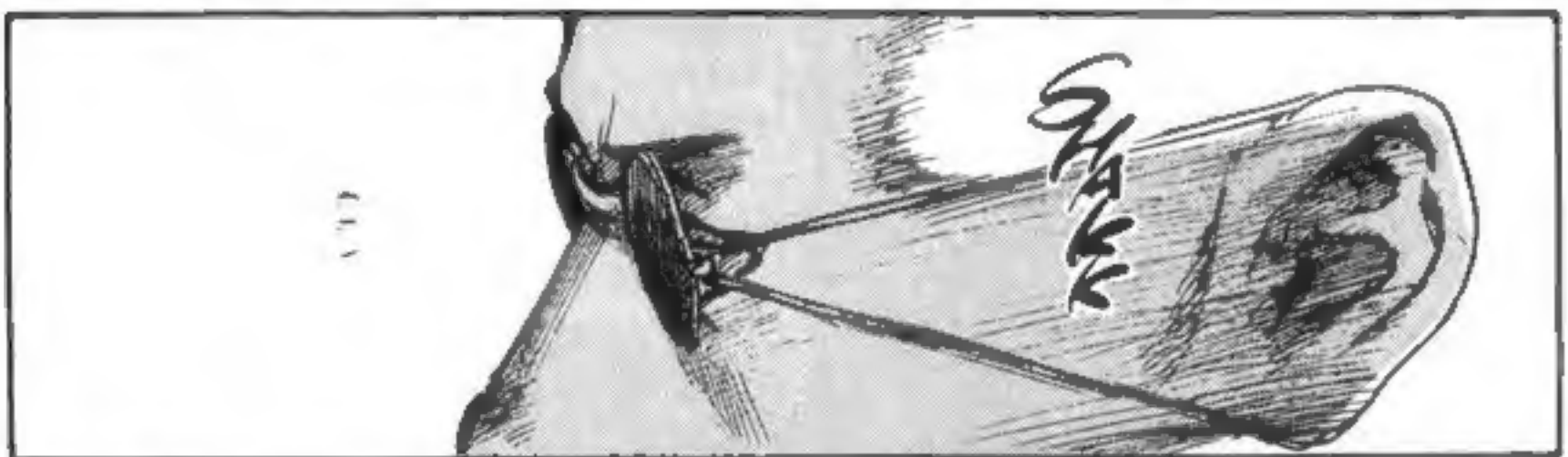
SURE... ANY-THING.

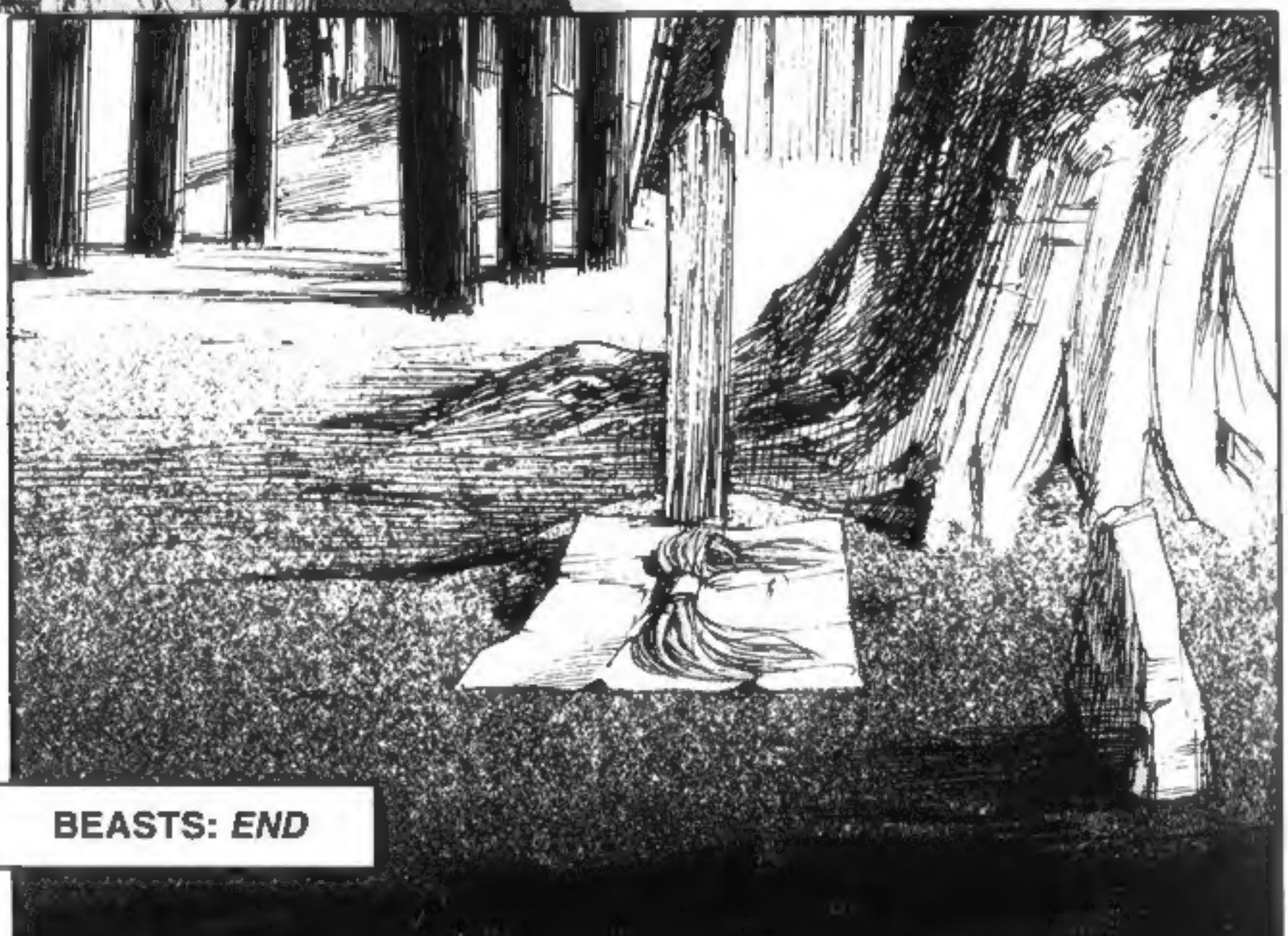
SORRY.

IT'S NOTHING.






SHAKK



BEASTS: *END*

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

Rin and her immortal bodyguard, Manji, have become separated, Rin risking life and limb in her pursuit of her family's murderer, the ruthless Anotsu Kagehisa, leader of the outlaw Ittō-ryū sword school. Manji is slowly recovering – and reassembling – after being dismembered by Ittō-ryū thugs, and has set off to find Rin. Meanwhile, both friends and enemies are also assembling. Manji's ally, the beautiful assassin Hyakurin, has fallen into the hands of Ittō-ryū killers who will go to any length – and spare no agonies – to get her to talk. The name of the game is vengeance, but if Hyakurin's comrade Giichi can find her before she dies, the Ittō-ryū may get more of it than they bargained for!

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